

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE ISSUES

STRUCTURES AND DYNAMICS OF REVELATION

1. The Multitudes Searching for Revelation

During the life of Jesus, his opponents often asked for signs or revelations from heaven to validate his claim to be the Son of God. At present also the quest for heavenly revelations fills the field of popular religiosity. People from all walks of life are looking for revelations from above for a number of pragmatic reasons. (the parents consult the astrologers to study the horoscopes of the prospective couple, the *muhurtam*, the politicians rush to the astrologers to know what the stars foretell about their future or to know which would be the most auspicious day and time to file their nominations. Even before launching a rocket or a satellite our ultra-modern scientists and technicians do the same in the Indian space research centres.)

Ordinary people go to the palmist or to the parrot - fortune-teller to know the shape of their future. (drawing lots or throwing dice, computer astrologers, *vastu* specialist to decide upon the lucky design and location for their house.) People also flock to the alleged visionaries who see visions and apparitions from heaven, or *utter* prophecies from God.

Meanwhile Christianity believes itself to be a revealed religion. The Bible also talks about revelation of God through creation, historical events or the signs of the times, prophets, worship, Scripture, and above all through the person of Jesus, the Son of God.

2. Questions for Theology

It is in this charged atmosphere we want to study the theology of "Revelation and Faith." The socio-religious trends make us raise a series of serious faith questions so that we may have a clearer understanding about divine revelation, the very foundation of our faith.

Are there revelations of God in our world and history?

Are they true or false revelations?

How to assess the authenticity of any revelation?

Are genuine revelations of God truly possible, given the infinity of God and the finiteness of the human being?

Are they restricted only to a particular religious community or are they common to the whole human race and to all religions?

What do the Bible and Christian theology teach about revelation?

What can we learn from *other* religious traditions and from the ordinary people regarding the dynamics of divine revelations?

What is revealed in revelation: A person or some propositions?

Can we have any full and final revelation in history?

Is revelation a finished product or an ongoing process?

What is the role of culture in revelation: does it affect revelation, or affect only the expressions of it?

What are the teachings of the Church on Revelation in the past? Have they been changing and developing? Will there be new insights we need to learn about revelation?

These are some of the questions with which we have to grapple in this course on the *Theology of Revelation and Faith*.

3. Meaning of the term 'Revelation'

Our modern, scientific and secular world is rather skeptical about the religious notions of revelation. But revelation is one of the fundamental aspects of every *theistic* religion. The English term 'revelation', a derivative of the Latin term *revelatio*, is a translation of the Greek word *apocalypsis*. (in Syriac ܐܦܠܟܝܣܝܬܐ) Etymologically both *apocalypsis* and *revelatio* signify the act of unveiling, uncovering, exposing, or manifesting something hidden under a veil. When the veil is removed, the hidden reality is revealed/unveiled/exposed/manifested. What is hidden could be a person, thing, a meaning or a message. In the religious experience of revelation, the hidden reality of God and God's will is made manifest. However, the revealing Mystery never becomes totally transparent.

"In common language, even outside a religious context, revelation means a sudden and unexpected receipt of knowledge of a profoundly significant character, especially that which gives the recipient a new outlook on life and the world. It often designates the free action whereby one person confides his inner thoughts and sentiments to another, enabling the latter to enter into his or her spiritual world. In theology the term generally denotes the action by which God communicates to creatures a participation in His own knowledge, including His intimate self-knowledge. Such a communication is SUPERNATURAL since it transcends all that a creature could discover by its native powers." (New *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Second Edition, Vol. 12, p.193).

4. Phenomenological Perspective

Phenomenologists show that revelation is a common religious phenomenon in all theistic religions. The origin of every theistic religion is traced back to the phenomenon of a divine revelation and the response given to it by the founding individual, and later by the community that follows the founder. Believers of theistic religions understand revelation as a conscious experience of the free and loving manifestation of God that forms the fundamental object of their faith.

Phenomenology of religion shows that there are a variety of degrees and manners of revelation. In terms of **degrees**, revelation can be public or private, individual or communitarian, normative or optional. In terms of **manners**, revelation signifies pluralism of *theophanies* such as apparitions, visions, oracles, prophecy, divination, inspiration, and so on. Revelation does not stop with the communication of messages. It progressively moves towards the revelation of the very person of God, and God's self-gift to humanity. This becomes the central idea of revelation in Christianity. Christianity identifies many types of revelation. But it sees the culmination of God's revelation in the incarnation of the Son of God, his crucifixion, resurrection and the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, revealing the ultimacy of God's love in its fullness, and the human destiny in its completeness.

Phenomenologists like Johannes Deninger help us to focus our attention on five important characteristics of revelation, common in every theistic religion:

- a) Supernatural source of revelation: God, spirits, ancestors,
- b) Instrument or means of revelation: Sacred signs in nature (the sun, moon, and the stars, birds and animals, sacred places, or sacred times (new moon, full moon); dreams, vision, and ecstasies; ancestral words (*mantras*) and texts of sacred books.

c) Content or object of revelation: Didactic or instructional regarding God's will and plan; relational and communitarian revealing the requirements of community life and communion with God; mission and ministerial sending on specific tasks.

d) Recipients or addressees of revelation: Sacred and mysterious persons (sorcerers, sacrificing priests, soothsayers, prophets), or ordinary people (Jesus' disciples, the visionaries of Marian apparitions). They receive a commission or message intended for individuals or groups, for a people or the entire humanity.

e) Effect and consequence of revelation: Receiving personal instruction or persuasion; discerning divine mission; taking a prophetic stand and making critical pronouncements, and so on. All this may happen through inspiration or enlightenment in the mind and heart (consciousness) of the recipient, through the Indian category of *avatar* (some aspect of the divine being manifest in some visible form, including human form, to accomplish the establishment of an aspect of *dharma*), or through the Christian category of *incarnation* (the divine fully becoming a human person and going through all the historical experiences of human existence, except sin). Revelation, when received, brings radical change of views and values, and transformation of personal identity, personal moods and motivations, committing to difficult and daring missions. [Cf. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Chief Editor: Mircea Eliade, vol12, p.356].

5. Revelation is not Magic

Revelation needs to be distinguished from magic. Magical practices intend to have power over the divine. In many of the folk beliefs and practices to know the divine plan may have magical overtones of possessing spiritual power to control and manipulate the deity. But revelation stands for the free and autonomous interaction of God with humanity, manifesting the mysterious presence of God, which is frightening, but at the same time fascinating. Revelation is also perceived as an act of God's self-gift, communicating God's gracious will for the healing and wholeness of humankind. The special knowledge, message, vision, inspiration, etc., are gratuitous gifts of God, rather than the outcome of human power, efforts or manipulations. Revelation preserves the distinction between the revealer and the recipient of revelation, the Mystery that reveals and the matter that is revealed.

6. The Relentless Human Quest for the Ultimate Source Needs Revelation

Revelation can be understood only in the context of the human quest for transcendence and ultimate meaning. Even a superficial phenomenological analysis reveals that nothing or nobody in creation is self-existing and self-explanatory. Nothing or nobody in the world is a necessary and self-sufficient being. Our search for our origin, the meaning of our existence and its destiny constantly leads us to something or somebody already existing before us as an *a priori*. As a result we experience our existence as a gratuitous gift from another source.

Each time when we think that we have sighted the final horizon of our origin that will explain the ultimate source and origin of our existence, we move towards it with excitement. Soon we realize that the horizon has further receded into the unreachable distance beckoning us playfully and even seductively. The process of our self

transcendence can never stop at any point in this universe as the absolutely ultimate point. Such an ultimate point eludes our grasp in our existential and empirical world; yet it attracts us with irresistible charm and leaves us utterly restless. This unending game of hide and seek with the ultimate does not frustrate us or disillusion us. Rather, it inspires and energizes us to keep on moving ceaselessly into the unfathomably expanding infinite horizon.

Slowly we realize that we have no way of knowing the ultimate source of our origin by our own efforts and search, unless it gratuitously discloses itself to us. But we have a hazy pre-knowledge that this ultimate source of our being cannot be an impersonal being; but it has to be a personal being. We are *personal beings*~ sovereign subjects, capable of intelligence, love, - free will and response-ability. Therefore, we intuit with a spiritual certainty that the source that has given us our personal existence also should be personal being capable of knowledge and will, love and freedom, but to an infinite degree. But we can go only up to this level through our transcendental knowing: we have intimation, an intuition, a hypothesis which has some spiritual certainty. But we have no absolute certainty: This absolute certainty is possible only when this personal Absolute. and Ultimate Source, whom we call God, freely and lovingly reveals the God-self to us, in a gracious act of self-giving.

7. Our Restless Search for Ultimate Plenitude Requires Revelation

We also arrive at similar conclusion in our quest for ultimate knowledge, meaning, and love or the plenitude of life. No finite object or person gives us the ultimate satisfaction or the sense of absolute fulfillment. The ultimate knowledge, absolute love, or the fullness of life is still out of our reach. So also the absolute joy, happiness, and satisfaction are always eluding us. Yet, in the depth of our consciousness we have an implicit awareness and a lurking pre-knowledge that there should be such an ultimate source that can absolutely satisfy us. We hear its beckoning in every human experience, as its ultimate ground and source. Hence our transcendental quest for the ultimate fullness - and plenitude never seems to us to be irrational or unreasonable. On the contrary, this relentless search for the ultimately meaningful plenitude seems to be an essential aspect of being human, and becoming fully human. Without this transcendental quest, we are no longer authentically human. The implicit, but irresistible beauty and charm of the ultimate does not allow us the luxury to think, at any particular point, that we have reached the end of the road, and grasped our ultimate destiny. St. Augustine expressed this tension effectively when he said, "O God, our hearts are created for Thee. They can find no rest in anything created unless they rest in Thee." St. Paul also says that the entire cosmos itself is waiting with eager longing, almost groaning in labour pain, to obtain the plenitude of freedom and the fullness of the glory of God's children (Rom 8:19-23). Finally our hearts know that our alluring transcendental quest and our radical openness for ultimate fullness can have the intended satisfaction only through a gracious revelation from the Absolutely Loving God.

8. Revelation: Meeting of Human Quest and Divine Self-Gift

As we saw above, there is an inner and necessary human drive for the absolute. It becomes an *absolute quest and ultimate concern* for us, though the intensity of the consciousness may vary from person to person. This constitutive human quest necessarily contains an implicit demand that there be a transcendental absolute 'object' that

corresponds to this inner and unceasing impulse for ultimacy. But this fact cannot be absolutely established merely by our intellectual effort in an *a priori* way. We need to turn to the history of religious experiences to learn how God, the transcendent and absolute Reality, has planted this restless quest of the human spirit for absolute being and meaning, and how it responds to it. Such a historical analysis leads us to posit a personal and universally gracious God who is also restlessly reaching out to all creatures, especially humankind endowed with freedom, love and response-ability. The Evangelist John defines this personal and gracious God in terms of love: *God is love* (1 Jn 4:8). We hear the declaration of the self-identity of this gracious God in the book of Exodus: "[I am] the LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping love for the thousandth generation, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34:6-7). But for God's own gracious self-revelation, we cannot arrive at such an intimate understanding of God, either by our intellectual or spiritual quests. Otherwise, we shall be chasing only a grand illusion.

Such a gracious, faithful and personal God is constantly engaged to reach out in response to the *absolute quest* of the human heart for absolute plenitude, with a reciprocal *absolute loving concern*. Actually only God's loving concern enables and empowers the human hearts to be engaged in a relentless quest for the absolute. The Evangelist John captures this in his first letter: "It is not that we loved God [first], but that God loved us and sent His only Son... (1 Jn 4: 10). The Tamil Bhakti poet Manickavasagar declares that "We worship the Lord only by his grace."

9. God's Indwelling Spirit Guides the Human Quest and Grants Divine Revelation

God's love or grace is always sufficient and effective (2Cor 12:9). God's creative and revelatory words never fail in their mission (Is 55:10-11). Theology, taking the cue from the scripture, calls this effective love of God present and active in the whole universe and in all people, the *Holy Spirit*. It is the indwelling personal presence of God as a principle of life and the dynamism of the transcendental driving force, a source of power and energy, a force that inspires and empowers people to act beyond their normal power and capacity.

10. The Action of the Indwelling Spirit: Searching and Revealing

Once God has created the human subjects with the capacity for love and freedom, God becomes personally present to us as the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit energizes us to actualize the God given capacity for absolute transcendence, and for ultimate freedom and love. To do this God makes a free self-gift or self-communication to humankind. Thus, besides being totally transcendent to the world, God is also immanent in the world, especially in the human subjectivity, giving us our ability for absolute freedom and love. In the same way God is present to the whole human world and its history. This is not an impersonal presence but a personal one. By this personal presence God calls human freedom out of itself and beyond itself. God engages it in a self-transcending movement towards absolute fullness, the absolute being and meaning. The gracious presence of the indwelling Spirit within us inspires us and enables us to address God *abba* and to respond in filial love making a joyful self-gift of ourselves. We learn this through God's revelation only. Paul records this: "When we cry "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6).

11. Revelation is a Personal and Intimate Encounter

When we experience this act of God's self-gift and self-presence to the whole world, especially within the depth of human subjectivity and consciousness, we experience God's *revelation* or *manifestation* (self gift) in the form of a personal encounter, an event that radically transforms us. This gratuitous gift of the absolute Presence experienced within us tends to satisfy our transcendental quest for permanent being, fuller meaning in and through an ultimate loving relationship. From our everyday experiences we know how the personal encounters lead us to deeper levels of dialogue sharing more and more personal information, and finally to greater love and intimacy. In the words of poet Thiru Valluvar, the Lover wonders about his immense ignorance of his Beloved: "The more I come to know about her, the more I realize the magnitude of my ignorance and the enormous necessity to have more knowledge about her" (*Thirukural*: no. 1110). Psalm 139 captures this truth beautifully.

12. Divine Revelation is Personal, not Propositional

Such a revelatory experience cannot be reduced merely to receiving some heavenly messages, sacred doctrines or dogmatic propositions. As we have already said, revelation is a dynamic event of an interpersonal encounter between God and humanity. But this revelatory encounter can give birth to doctrinal articulations for the building up of the faith community. As such the doctrinal teachings of the Church necessarily form part and parcel of the economy of revelation.

13. Revelatory Experiences are Partial

We are able to grasp God in every single transcendental experience only partially, not absolutely. The moment we think that we have grasped God; God has already transcended our grasp to a further horizon, playfully beckoning us to move forward! Thus God hides and evades the total grasp in every particular revelatory experience. Such revelatory experiences are happening for everybody and everywhere, because "God shows no partiality" (Act 10:34). Hence, nobody can claim the privilege of having a monopoly over God's revelation, the gracious self-gift of God. Still, each revelatory event is effective and sufficient as a sacramental mediation of the salvific love of God. Yet God can also choose a particular people to mediate the salvific revelation in a special and unique way. It is with this sacramental privilege the Church claims that God has finally revealed himself fully and definitively through His Son Jesus Christ (Heb 1:2). But the full comprehension of this full revelation in Jesus will always elude the grasp of the Church. This makes the Church to be ever earnest in its journey as a co-pilgrim in solidarity with other religions and people of good will towards the ultimate fullness.

14. Active and Passive Dimension of Revelation

In every revelatory experience there are active and passive dimensions. It is active in so far as God makes a gracious self-donation, calling humanity for an intimate dialogical relationship with Him. It is passive in so far as God's gracious self-giving is gratefully received. In the revelatory event, not only God can be active. Humanity also can be active in so far as it receives God's self-gift gratefully in freedom and love as a sovereign subject, and responds to it with the same love and freedom, by making a reciprocal self-donation to God.

15. The General Structure of Revelation

From what we have said so far we can now easily identify the general structure of

God's revelation. It is operative subjectively in all persons. It is available, by God's grace, to every human consciousness.

Whenever and wherever there is a genuine experience of self transcendence, an experience that goes much beyond the experiencing self in search of what is genuinely ultimate in life, love, goodness, beauty, and meaning, there is the experience of God. It is God who draws human freedom out of and beyond itself in search of ultimate being and meaning. When one encounters the presence of this Ultimate Self as a free gift, one feels enabled and ennobled to respond to it lovingly with a reciprocal self-gift through self-surrender. This means that this assurance of God's revelation is a constitutive dimension of everyone's existence as a human subject endowed with freedom and love. For Christianity the full revelation of God, the experience of the personal presence of God, comes through Jesus Christ. "He is the image of the invisible God... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven..." (Col 1:15, 19). Jesus also said, "The works I do in my Father's name testify to me... The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:25, 30).

16. Revelation and Religious Pluralism

In our context of religious pluralism we realize that what is normative in every revelatory experience is a genuine experience of the transcendence, and the encounter of a God who meets our transcendental quest with a loving self-gift. In response we also make a reciprocal self-gift in an act of loving surrender. Plurality of religions demands plurality of revelatory mediations, each legitimate in its own way, depending on the graciousness of God's gift and the originality of human response, inspired and enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. But each particular revelation, in so far as it is a personal gift and grace of God, is sufficient and efficacious in offering people a transcendental call, inviting them for a personal encounter and communion, empowering them to respond in love and joy. We should say that the Church has come to understand in a more holistic way the complex nature of revelation, only in its dialogical relationship with other religions. The Second Vatican Council declared that "Religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the person. .. What is more, this doctrine of freedom has its roots in divine revelation, and for this reason Christians are bound to respect it all the more conscientiously" (Declaration on Religious Freedom, No.9). Similarly, in the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions, Vatican II proclaimed: "In her task of fostering unity and love among men, and even among nations, she [the Church] gives primary consideration" to her relationship with non-Christian religions, "to what human beings have in common and what promotes fellowship among them. .. the Catholic Church, therefore, has this exhortation for her [children]. . . acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among [other religions] as well as the values in their society and culture" (Declaration on ... the Non-Christian Religions, No.1).

17. Variety of Revelations

Though the structure and dynamics of revelation are one always, the ways and the processes in which it takes place are many. Basically the difference is to be traced to the absolute freedom of the gracious God in revealing Himself. Indicating to this absolute freedom for choosing when, where, how and to whom He reveals Himself, God said to Moses: "I will make all my goodness pass before you. . . I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But, you cannot see my face" (Ex 33: 19-20). Each revelatory experience can differ from place to place, age

to age, religion to religion, and even person to person. God does not follow any strict rubrics, and neither can he force us to follow any. Besides, since the human context is also pluralistic in its environmental and socio-cultural- historical dimensions, God reaches out to each people in a way suited to them. In every particular revelation what God told Moses literally takes place. God told Moses, "While my glory passes by ... I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen" (Ex 33:21-22). But we were privileged to see the glory of God's compassion and love in the face of Jesus, God's Son. He is the visible image of the invisible God, both in His words and deeds, expressing God's ultimate loving concern for humankind.

18. Historical Revelations are Mediated

No historical revelation is direct and immediate so as to be called an *epiphany*, an event of total unveiling and a direct experience of encountering the Divine transparently. All experiences of revelation, though they happen in the human consciousness, are historically mediated through some finite historical medium, that serves as the focus of attention or the vehicle for imagination. It could be a person, an event, a thing, an idea, imagery, and so on. There is no total transparency of God yet in any of the revelatory experience. Still, the revelatory experience seems to be very direct and immediate, having an aura of authenticity. Our heart is certain in saying, "I have seen the LORD. I have heard Him and touched him." This experience has impacted us at the very roots of our being and has effected a radical change in our vision and values, feelings and attitudes. None of our affirmation about God can be ultimate. The mediating Reality is always less than what is mediated. The mediated is greater than what is affirmed and articulated. As none of our historical and existential *affirmation* of God can be absolute, every such affirmation becomes a *negation* at the same time. God is more than what we have affirmed. No historical revelation can ever exhaust God so absolutely that we would have the power to make any absolute affirmation. "For we now see in a mirror, dimly....Now I know only in parts" (1 Cor 13:12-13). The Indian thinkers have called this *apophatic* experience as "*Neti - Neti*" (not this; not that).

19. Cosmic Revelation

The Universe or the cosmos is the first self expression of God's goodness and power. So nature is a privileged medium of God's revelation. The book of Genesis shows us God himself certifying that the cosmos is good at every stage of its creation, and therefore, capable of revealing Him. Psalm 19 proclaims this truth loudly. Similarly Psalm 104 celebrates the revelatory capacity of the cosmos. The book of Wisdom takes this discussion a little deeper. Using a philosophical language and the methodology of analogy, it says that all could easily recognize the power of the cosmos to reveal God. (Wis 13:1-9)

In the New Testament, St. Paul takes up this argument of cosmic revelation in his letter to the Romans. (Rom 1: 18-23).

20. Private Revelations and illuminations.

The Church recognizes two kinds of revelations: public and private. Public revelations are also called official or normative revelation. The Church believes that whatever is in the scripture and the sacred teachings of the Magisterium contains revelatory truths that every believer has to accept in order to be a Christian. Whatever is necessary for salvation is abundantly given in these official revelations. But from the period of the apostolic Church we see that certain charismatic gifts are given to certain

individuals, in order to build the community in the fullness of faith and truth (1 Cor 12:7-11; 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4: 11-13). Gift of prophesy or the gift of speaking in the name of God is a significant gift given to the individual to serve the wider community by equipping the faithful for their own ministries in building the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:10; Rom 12:6; Eph 4: 11). The apostles call the faithful to be watchful and discerning about these individuals. For overconfidence in these private revelations or *charism* had led in the past to various errors and heresies like *Montanism*, which gave more importance to private revelations than to the teachings of the scripture or of the Church. St. John tells his community, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone into the world" (1 Jn 4: 1).

When the private revelations and illuminations are not contradicting the scriptural and magisterial teachings, but helping people to better understand them and practice them, the Church has always accepted their value and approved them as genuine. However, the Church is not too eager to accept and approve all revelations. The over eager quest for the extraordinary is to be suspected and not to be encouraged. (CCC no. 67).

21. Revelation through the Signs of the Times

Signs of the Times is a revelatory category that can be traced back to the prophetic activities in the Old Testament. The prophets observed and assessed the socio-historical trends of their times. They judged whether Israel was faithful or unfaithful to God. Jesus also followed the same prophetic approach. He criticized the Pharisees and the Sadducees who, rather than reading and interpreting the signs of the times, were asking Jesus to show them some magical signs from heaven. He told them, "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the *signs of the times*" (Mt 16: 1-3; Lk 12:54-56).

The credit goes to Pope John XXIII for using this term as a modern theological category in the Bull *Humanae Salutis* (1961) convening the Second Vatican Council. In it he argued that if the Church would look at the world with the eyes of the Risen Lord who has not abandoned her, she could see enough indications of light and hope, despite all the veritable signs of darkness and hopelessness. Later this phrase was used by Pope John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), as the sub-title for three sections (nos. 29, 126, 142). In these sections the Pope had noted three world trends, significant for the mission of the Church: the progressive development of the working classes, the growing role of women in public life, and the gradual disappearance of colonialism. Later Vatican II also used the phrase *signs of the times* twice (GS 4; UR 4).

22. Revelation, Faith and Reason

Revelation and reason need not be opposing. For a believer acknowledges that God is the source of both. If revelation is basically a self-communication of God to humanity, then there can be nothing opposing to reason. It is only reasonable that God, who created humankind in His image and likeness with reason and intellect, also provides ways and means to satisfy the hunger and thirst of reason. Hence, a reason that is animated by faith, and a faith that is enlightened by reason, cannot be opposing. They will complement each other in guiding humanity towards fullness.

"Not only can there be no conflict between faith and reason; but they also support each other since reason demonstrates the foundations of faith and, illuminated by its light, pursues the understanding of divine things, while faith frees and protects reason from errors and provides it with manifold insights" (Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, in *Christian Faith*, Neuner-Dupuis, No.135).

Vatican II also wanted the faithful to recognize the autonomy of faith and reason and the harmony that should exist between them. The Council also wanted to steer clear between fideism and rationalism. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World made the following statement:

"This sacred Synod. .. declares that there are "two orders of knowledge" which are distinct, namely, faith and reason. .. "When the human arts and sciences are practised, they use their own principles and their proper methods, each in its own domain." Hence, "acknowledging this just liberty," this sacred Synod affirms the legitimate autonomy of human culture and especially of the sciences" (GS 59).

The Council wanted to foster a faith that was informed by intellect, but an intellect enlightened by the Holy Spirit. (DV 5). (cfr CF No.164). In his Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Pope John Paul II has graphically presented the harmony that exists between faith and reason:

"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth - in a word, to know himself--so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. *Ex* 33:18; *Ps* 27:8-9; 63:2-3; *Jn* 14:8; *1 Jn* 3:2; Preamble, *Fides et Ratio*).

23. Revelation, Science and Technology

There were notorious conflicts in the past between the Church authorities and the pioneers in modern scientific knowledge. The conflict between Galileo and the Church is a classical example. The conflict came because the Church leaders wrongly perceived that, the new scientific discoveries contradicted the truths of revelation and the literal interpretation of the Scripture. They forgot that the Scripture was meant to reveal the truths of faith rather than the truth of science, which operate on the basis of different assumptions and methodologies. But now such conflicts have become things of the past. Pope John Paul II told the scientists that those conflicts have been overcome "thanks to the power of persuasion of science, and thanks above all to the work of a scientific theology, which has deepened the understanding of faith and freed it from the conditionings of time" (*Address to the Scientists*, 1980, CF no. 170).

The new attitude toward science is due to the new insights into the autonomy and legitimacy of separate objectives and methodologies of the three truth seeking disciplines: Theology, Philosophy and Science.

- a) Religion and theology deal with issues of divine revelation and faith. Theology studies the divine reality seeking the ultimate meaning and truth, and its existential implications, using theological methodology. In Theology our faith seeks the ultimate truth and, meaning of our life, and their existential demands. Therefore, theology's methodology is basically a methodology in which our faith is the fundamental moving and motivating force. Traditional Theology has identified two moments in its methodological dynamics, integrating both faith and reason: *Credo ut intelligam* (I believe that I may understand), and *Intelligo ut credam* (I understand that I may believe). Theology has its own internal criteria to validate its truth claims, in harmony with its faith methodology.
- b) Philosophy is another truth seeking discipline. But it uses the rationalist methodology to understand the ultimate truth and meaning of the universe and human existence. It is enough for Philosophy if it establishes its truth claims by rational parameters intrinsic to its methodology.

- c) Similarly, science also is another important truth seeking discipline serving the good of the world and humankind. It has its own strict empirical methodologies and internal criteria of validation. This orientation applies to both pure sciences and social and human' sciences. Technology is the outcome of applying scientific insights in practical and pragmatic ways.

We are now living in a time of inter-relations, inter-dependency and inter-disciplines. No discipline can function today in splendid isolation, without running the risk of missing the whole for the particular. Therefore there is a need for mutual respect and open dialogue between science and religion. Both serve humanity from different perspectives. But the intended unity between science and religion should not be confused into identity or uniformity. Science cannot become religion, and religion cannot become science. Religion is not founded on science, nor is science an extension of religion.

"Each should possess its own principles, its patterns of procedures, its diversities of interpretation and its *own* conclusions... Science must bear witness to its *own* worth. .. Theology must be in vital interchange today with science; just it always has been with philosophy and other *forms of learning*. .. The vitality and significance *of* theology will, in a profound way be reflected in its ability to incorporate [the finding *of science*]" (cf. *Letter to the Director of the Vatican Observatory*, 1 June, 1988).

Once there was the ill repute that the Church was against science and technology. But today, the positions are reversed. At the same time the Church is also prophetic in its denunciation *of* science and technology when they ignore their ethical responsibility *of* serving humanity and protecting the cosmos, and function merely *on* the basis *of* selfish serving profit motives, fuelling a culture *of* death and destruction.

24. Conclusion

As long as the Church is engaged in the Abraham pilgrimage *of* moving towards the fullness *of* truth and life, this collaboration among theology, philosophy, and science will continue, enriching and ennobling *one* another. By this alliance, the Church's understanding *of* God's revelation and human faith response will be enhanced many fold. With this introduction to the **Structures and Dynamics of Revelation and Faith**, we are now properly poised to plunge into deeper understanding of Christian Revelation.

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CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

1. Biblical Understanding of Revelation

The Holy Scriptures do not give us the terminology for revelation in a systematic way. The Bible is more interested in the fact of revelation than in the notion of revelation. When the Bible speaks of revelation, quite often what is intended is God the Creator actively disclosing to human beings His power and glory, His plan and will, in short, Himself in relationship to the human beings and human history. From the standpoint of its contents divine revelation is both indicative and imperative (Ex. 20: 20-23; Dt 4: 13) and in each respect normative. God's disclosures are made in the context of demand for trust in and obedience to, what is revealed - a response, which is wholly controlled by the contents of revelation itself. In other words God's revelation comes to us not as information without obligation, but as a mandatory rule of faith and conduct (Dt 29: 29).

Revelation has two focal points: God's purpose of offering salvation, His plan of intervening in human history in order to realize this salvation (Gen.6:13-21; 17:15-21; 15: 3-21; Eph. 3: 3-11) and the response of human beings to this offer and plan (Gen.12: 1ff; Eph 1: 9ff). The result of this offer and response is salvation (2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15: 4). The fallen human beings need this revelation for their salvation (Rom 2: 14).

We hardly find the noun 'revelation' in the Old Testament. The common form in which the term is found is the 'verbal form' (cfr. Gen. 35: 7; Num 12: 6; 23:4,16; Amos 7: 1,4,7; Is 2: 3; Jer 1:4). This is perfectly in accordance with the Hebrew mentality which gives little importance to abstract nouns; it focuses rather on the verb: the Israelite looks chiefly at what goes on, what is happening. This is also due to another aspect of the religious mentality of the Jews; for them life was possible only because of divine intervention. True to this notion of life, revelation in the O.T. is not registered as a noun, but described by verbs. The verbs which they commonly use, namely, *to disclose*, *to announce*, *to present something clearly to some one* indicate acts of personal relationships. Thus revelation is presented as God approaching the human beings in a personal manner in order to enter into personal relationship with them. This is expressed in the Old Testament as making known His name to Israel (Ex. 3:11- 15) and entering into a Covenant with them {Gen. 17: 1ff; Ex. 19:3-8). At the same time His uniqueness and His holiness, His majesty and freedom remain intact and supreme.

In the New Testament which is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, revelation consists in making known the Kingdom of God to the disciples of Christ and through them to the rest of humankind (Mt 13:10-11). The one God of the Old Testament is revealed as the Triune God (Eph 1: 3-14; Rom 8:14-17. This God speaks to humanity in and through Christ (Heb 1: 1ff). Jesus by his life and ministry reveals this God (John 1: 18; 14:7-11) His life is the perfect revelation of God (2 Cor 4: 4; Col 1:15; Heb 1, 3). The New Testament revelation is the unfolding of God's plan through Christ (1 Cor 7-10; Col 1:19ff). The effect of this revelation is the fellowship of the human persons with the Triune God and among themselves (1 John 1: 1-5). The final stage of this revelation will be realized at the Parousia when Christ will manifest himself as the Lord of the new earth and new heaven (Rev 21 & 22).

2. Revelation in the Patristic Theology

In most of the early theologians there is no systematic doctrine of revelation. Although the word appears here and there, it is rarely used with the technical meaning it has acquired in modern theology. Our purpose in the study of revelation theology in this period is not to give a complete and exhaustive survey of the teaching of the Fathers in this matter, but merely to present certain key points that are especially significant for the subsequent history of theology.

A. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED THE UNDERSTANDING OF REVELATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Theology being a reflection on the faith of a community (i.e. a community that encounters God in its need for salvation), the theological method will change according to the mentalities and needs of the various communities. The variety in the method will necessarily give us concepts that are different. This is true also of revelation. In our study of the Fathers and of the theological tradition it is very important to keep this fact in the mind. We can notice the following factors that influenced the development of the theology of revelation during the first four centuries.

The first Christians were under the impact of the great manifestation of God in Christ. We find that this impact had its repercussions on their writings. Secondly they developed a revelation theology that sought to establish that Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and was therefore the Messiah. Thirdly, against the pagans they tried to prove that Christ fulfilled and surpassed the wisdom and piety contained in pagan philosophy and religion. Fourthly, they had to face heretical movements in the Church itself, which dangerously deviated from the true concept of revelation. These are some of them:

a) *Gnosticism*: It was fundamentally an attack on the mainstream Christian view of revelation. It endeavored to create a Christianity, which was fitting into the culture of the time, which would absorb the religious philosophy of the Greeks, to leave but a small place for revelation as the foundation of all theological knowledge, for faith and for the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* I, 254). They looked upon Jesus as a teacher sent from heaven to deliver a body of saving doctrines for the salvation of those who had within them a spark of the divine spiritual substance.

b) *Marcionism*: The creator-god of the Old Testament was a mere demiurge. They would therefore, repudiate the entire Old Testament revelation.

c) *Manichesim*: They looked upon the material world as a prison of darkness and sought by various practices to escape into the spiritual realm of light. These, therefore, do not accept revelation through the signs of nature and history.

d) *Montanists*: The fullness of Spirit, they claimed, had not been communicated through Christ and the Apostles, but only through *Montanus* and his companions, in whom the final age of the activity of the Holy Spirit was beginning to dawn.

e) *Eunomists*: God can be perfectly known by human mind.

B. SYRIAC FATHERS

The Syriac understanding of divine revelation is rooted in the experiences and events of the history of salvation that are clearly depicted in the biblical exposition of salvific events of history. The experiences and events of the biblical history of salvation are basically governed by the divine mercy that creates, sustains and nurtures everything to attain perfection. The notion of the understanding of divine realities is, from the visible to the invisible, from the accessible to the inaccessible, from the easy one to the difficult one, and the like (St. Ephrem *On Faith* 76:11-13; 80:8). The mysterious power and activity of the divinity/creator inhabits in the creatures. Thus divine power holds up, sustains and guides the creatures as the soul holds up the body (Mar Jacob Sarugensis, *Homiliae Selectae* Vols I-V) or as the intellect inhabits in a human being (HS IV 556, 4-5; 557, 1-2). As a sequel to this the Son came to inhabit/incarnate in the human body/person (HS II 517, 19-518, 3; Letters of Jacob of Serugh, Ep ,XIX 113,12-13) that was created for its glorification. The mysteries of creation and incarnation are proclaiming the immanence and transcendence of the divinity with regard to the created world (HS II 210, 3), especially to humanity. Following the Semitic mode of perception, as explicit in the Bible, Syriac theological vision of revelation is symbolic, narrative and biblical.

1. Divine Self-revelation in the Syriac Understanding

There is an essential difference between divinity and humanity, divine and human realms. St. Ephrem describes this in terms of an ontological gap, a 'chasm' between the creator and the creatures. "What creature can search the Godhead? There is a chasm between it and the Creator. It is love that rules in between them" (*On Faith* 69: 11, 12; cf. Lk 16:26). Precisely it means, 'What is made cannot reach its Maker' (*On Faith* 30:2). Hence, created beings, by their own powers alone, are basically incapable of knowing God. Ephrem explains this by the natural analogy of the burning sun. The all surpassing and inexplorable nature of God and divine matters are like the burning sun that cannot be looked into by human eyes or approached by humans (*On Faith* 26:5). If approached, humans would perish and it amounts to self annihilation. Any created intellect cannot contain the Creator. Hence, if any creature attempts to investigate (*aqqeb* اققب) and conquer so as to contain the whole of the creator would be against the nature of a creature. Such acts amount to 'prying into' God's nature (*On Faith* 9:16). But God, on account of his merciful initiative crossed over from this side of the 'chasm' to the human side and revealed Himself to humanity for the salvation of the whole created world. According to Ephrem whatever is revealed can be put under intellectual inquiry and it is reasonable and legitimate; but, going beyond that would be an outrage against divinity and unbecoming to human nature.

a) The Hidden and the Revealed

On account of the human finitude, divinity and divine realities are 'hidden' to humanity in human perspective, unless God reveals himself to humanity. But the divine mercy that creates sustains and nurtures everything, lovingly engages itself with all creatures; especially with humanity in a relational manner. The consciousness and experience of the divine relational engagement in human history is well depicted in the biblical history of salvation. On account of this dialogical relationship with the divinity, all created realities assume a symbolic power of signifying and proclaiming the creative force of the divine power/Word inherent in them. This factor is precisely the sacramental power of the creatures. So St. Ephrem states:

In every place, if you look, His symbol is there,
 And when you read, you will find His types.
 For by him were created all creatures,
 And He engraved His symbols upon His possessions.
 When he created the world,
 He gazed at it and adorned it with His images.
 Streams of his symbols opened, flowed and poured forth His symbols on His members
 (*On Virginity* 20: 12).

What God had revealed about Himself through symbols and types are only what is needed for humanity to arrive at the knowledge of divine realities for salvation. Hence, the sum total of what is revealed, if put together, cannot depict the whole of divinity. Only what is revealed of God can be experienced and understood by human intellect and heart. However, God in his mercy has given glimpses of his hidden being and hidden plan through symbols and types. Only such glimpses can mediate between the infinite unknowable and the finite intelligence. They are not proper (*galyuto* گَالِيُوتُو) or instances of total divine manifestation, but pointers to some higher divine realities that will be revealed in due course of God's progressive self-revelation. This progressive self-revelation is according to the "rate of the comprehensive capacity of the human race. Looking from the human side it is according to the progressive way of salvation. So Ephrem writes:

For the sake of the fruit he laid the Way
 Which runs from the Tree right to the Cross?
 It extended from the Wood to the Wood
 And from Eden to Zion,
 From Zion to Holy Church
 And from the Church to the Kingdom
 (*Against Heresies* 26:4)

The mysteries revealed, through the types and symbols by the mercy of God, retain their mysterious nature even in revelation. Through revelation the mystery is made tangible in a participatory manner to anyone who accepts the revelation in faith. As the revelation is through the divine mercy the acceptance of revelation in faith also has to be by a loving relational approach. It is because mystery cannot be conquered from outside, but can be participated only subjectively through the loving relationship and submission in faith to the mystery.

b) Two Witnesses and Three Harps of Divinity

According to Ephrem the natural world (*kyono* كْيُونُو) and the scriptures (*ktobo* كُتُوبُو) are two witnesses to God and his activities. They are the two channels of divine self-revelation. These two sources, in effect, did the preparation for the culminating divine self-revelation in the incarnate mystery of the Son. In fact God prepared all peoples, the Jewish people through Torah (the scriptural law) and the gentile peoples through the nature (natural law) for the new covenant. Once Nature and Scriptures had cleansed the land, the new commandments have been given in the new covenant (cf. *Against Heresies*, 28: 11) in Christ. The two Testaments are considered the two harps in the right and left hands of the Son, the Redeemer. Together with them he had the third harp, the nature, as a middle one, bearing witness to the other two manifesting that he is playing with all the three harps as the Lord of the universe (*On Virginity* 29:1).

c) Unity of Revelation and the Scriptures

Prophecy (OT) and apostolic preaching (NT) form a continuum. Even the present day preaching in the Church is part of the apostolic preaching. This, in other words, means the unity and organic relationship between the Old and, New Testaments. Even though they are at two stages, they diffuse the same message. The basic reason is that the same Spirit inspires and fills the scriptures as a whole and teaches the same mystery. Jacob of Serugh explains that as one drinks from the four rivers of Eden in the Old, the same four rivers are seen in the Evangelists of the New (HS III 653, 9-12). Christ is the author of both orders: the Law and the Gospel as well as the mediator of both. Other images of unity of the scriptures from Jacob of Serugh are: Christ is the body and the two covenants are his hands. The two testaments are like two links of a chain that interlock perfectly. The two testaments form a single house which has a floor (foundation), the Old Testament, and a roof which is the New Testament. The inter-testamental unity is clarified by the analogy of body and soul, in which Scriptures form a single body of which Christ is the soul. This vision naturally focuses on the Christocentric vision where Christ unifies and perfects the whole of salvation history, already actualized, yet in progress. Christ is the source, meaning, efficacy and the final goal of all salvific symbols of both nature and scripture. He is the 'Lord of symbols' and 'Sea of symbols'. The whole of the Old Testament with its symbols of the kings, priests and prophets, was pouring into Christ, the 'Sea of symbols'. Hence, Ephrem writes:

Therefore, the sea is Christ who is able to receive
The sources and springs and rivers and streams
That flow forth from within scripture (*On Virginity* 9: 12).
For it is Christ who perfects its symbols by his Cross,
Its types by his body, its adornments by his beauty,
And all of it by all of him! (*On virginity* 9: 15).

2. Progressive Divine Self-revelation for Salvation

According to the Syriac Fathers, championed by Ephrem, the progressive self-revelation of God to humanity has three developmental stages. These three stages are explained by the clothing imagery.

a) Clothing in Symbols and types

Divinity clothing himself in the garment of symbols and types: Natural world and the scriptures are the two witnesses of God. Symbols of nature and types of the Scripture are revealing divine mysteries to the world. Ephrem clarifies:

In his book Moses described the creation of the natural world, so that both Nature and Scripture might bear witness to the Creator: Nature through man's use of it, Scripture, through his reading of it. These are the witnesses which reach everywhere, They are to be found at all times, present at every hour, Confuting the unbeliever who defames the Creator (*On Paradise* 5:2).

Symbols and types are mysteries (*roze* ܠܝܫܬܐ) that contain and point to divine realities, the truth (*shrora* ܬܚܬܐ) as Ephrem finds. The divine mysteries (*roze*) revealed through symbols and types indicate the connection between two different modes of

realities, the two worlds of divine and human realms. The power and functions of symbols and types are well explained by Sebastian Brock:

Types and symbols are a means of expressing relationships and connections, of instilling meaning into everything. They operate in several different ways, between the Old Testament and the New, between this world and the heavenly, between the New Testament and the Sacraments, between the Sacraments and the eschaton. In every case they 'reveal' something of what is otherwise 'hidden' (S. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns on Paradise*, 102-3).

Symbols and types, while indicating what is revealed in a symbolic manner, point to the signified reality that would be fully achieved in the eschaton. The divine hand in creation and that in the history of the created world progressing according to the biblical vision of history provides the sacramentality of the created world and the sacramental world-vision. Faith is the medium for the grasping of this world-vision and it enables one to understand and submit oneself to the creative power and the salvific purpose of the divinity that is fully active in the nature and in history.

b) Clothing in Names and Words

Divinity clothing himself in the garment of names/words: What is here relevant is Ephrem's theology of Divine Names. Divinity in revealing himself came down to human terms and nature, in order to make Himself known to humanity. Ephrem writes:

We should realize that, had He not put on the names of such things, It would not have been possible for Him to speak with us humans. By means of what belongs to us did he draw close to us: He clothed Himself in our language, so that He might clothe us in His mode of life. He asked for our form and put this on, And then, as a father with His children, He spoke with our childish state. (*On Faith* 31:2).

Divinity assuming human names such as Father, Son, Creator, Being, are 'perfect names' as to the nature of God and other names such as, king, commander, shepherd, wine, and so on are 'borrowed names' indicating only some aspects of the divinity. All these show the divine descent into human language in revelation so as to draw humans to the divinity. Ephrem concludes his theology of divine human relationship through names in revelation as, "He gave us His names, he received from us our names; His names did not make Him any the greater, whereas our names made Him small" (*On Faith* 5:7)

C Clothing in Flesh and Incarnation

Divinity clothing himself in the flesh and the nature of humanity in the mystery of incarnation: Divinity when clothed in human nature became tangible to all human beings. This clothing imagery in incarnation extends to the death and resurrection and the Eucharistic presence of the Lord to all, at all times and places. The whole dispensation of revelation and salvation has its source, medium and goal in the human body of Christ. The same physical body that healed the sick and blessed all, while he was corporeally

present in the world is being offered now to all who approach him in sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. There is perfect unity and continuity between Christ's physical body and his Eucharistic body, his mystical body, the Church, and the individual Christians. All these are clothings on the road of salvation. All these clothings are for the needed cures, rectifications, healings and perfections aimed by God. Hence, Ephrem comments that as the leaven works silently but powerfully in the mass of dough, Christ's body works in the human race: "As the leaven in the mass of dough, so too is his body in the mass of the house of Adam" (*Commentary of Diatessaron XI, 21*).

The different garments of revelation and salvation have been put on in the saving plan of God. The healing and saving mystery of the incarnate body of Christ is illuminated by Ephrem in the background of the blind man healed by the spittle in Jn 9:6. So Ephrem writes:

Thy garment, Lord, is a fountain of healing;
In thy visible dress dwells thy hidden power.
A little spittle from thy mouth was a mighty wonder,
For light was in the clay it made. .
In thy bread is hidden a Spirit not to be eaten, .
In thy wine dwells a fire not to be drunk.
Spirit in thy bread, fire in thy wine,
A wonder set apart, received by our lips (*On Faith 10:7*).

By these three modes of clothing Divinity related and revealed himself to humanity for the salvation of the whole creation through humanity with a double meaning; through the humanity of the incarnate Son and that of each human person with the human activity in the world. In this last part, based on human activity, the Church and human communities are in the focus through their 'garment of witnessing' by the acts of living faith. As a fourth stage the Church has to be clothed in the 'garment of witnessing' to the salvific mystery of Christ, her Bridegroom, in the world.

3. The Realities and Goals of Divine Self-revelation

God reveals himself because of his loving kindness and mercy. It is an act of loving condescension. Ephrem explains:

Who will not give thanks to the Hidden One, most hidden of all,
Who came to open revelation, most open of all,
For He put on a body, and other bodies felt Him
Though minds never grasped Him (*On Faith 19:7*).

What God reveals about Himself is only as far as what is necessary for humanity to arrive at the knowledge *of* divine realities for attaining salvation. Understanding *of* divine realities is proportionate to the divine-human engagements. Whatever is not revealed remains ever hidden. Hence, in the divine-human relational engagement the transcendence and immanence *of* God are basic factors and they are felt by human nature in the tension between the hidden and revealed factors *of* the divinity. In other words God is hidden and revealed at the same time. This hidden and revealed nature *of* God provides objective

and subjective realms *of* human understanding *of* God. Whatever is revealed can be put under human intellectual and scientific inquiry in an objective manner. As the human experiences *of* God and divine-human engagements grow, humanity will be given proportionate experience *of* the hidden divine aspects through the signs, symbols and types that are sacramentally pointing to the divine realities. At such a level the source *of* divine revelation for human divinization and salvation is the subjective level *of* mystical silence and submission in faith.

The progressive self-revelation *of* God is primarily a divine initiative out *of* divine mercy. But humanity has to respond to this loving initiative *of* divinity in a responsive love. This factor is well emphasized and illustrated by Ephrem through different imageries. The first one is the human physical eye and its power *of* seeing. Even though our physical eye is powerful enough to see, it cannot see anything in the darkness. It needs first some light from the object to fall into it before it starts seeing properly (cf. *On Faith* 25: 5, 6). This, in other words, means that at first revelation has to be offered by the divinity to make us see by faith. Only with the light *of* revelation we can see and believe. The second image is that *of* human words and writing. Even though our human tongue/mouth and hand are physically fit for speaking and writing, we first need the learning of the alphabets and words as an input for starting to speak and write (cf. *On Faith* 25: 4). Similarly, we need initial divine self-revelation for us to believe and act accordingly. The third imagery is that of human swimming. Even *if* our body is physically fit for swimming, we cannot swim in the vacuum. The presence *of* water is necessary for swimming as a support to the body/person who is swimming (*On Faith* 25: 8, 9). Similarly, divine revelation has to reach humans first in order to start believing and acting. These three imageries clearly express the need *of* initial divine initiative, divine grace, and at the same time the needed human response in faith.

The goal *of* divine self-revelation is faith and salvation. The divine self-revelation through symbols and types, divine names, and through the Incarnation are proclaiming the same truth in different levels *of* its manifestation. It is faith that gives the unified understanding and acceptance *of* the same truth running through all the stages *of* divine self-manifestation. This understanding is the salvific synchronic understanding *of* the truth *of* the history *of* salvation regarding the past, present and about the ages to come. The 'eye *of* faith' can attain such a synchronic vision *of* the complementarity between the 'first Adam' and the 'Second Adam', Christ; between the two covenants; between symbols and types towards their fulfillment in Christ, etc. One best example *of* such a synchronic vision is supplied by the Syriac exegesis *of* the 'pierced side *of* Christ' on the cross: "But one *of* the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (*In* 19:34). Here the important factors are the 'pierced side', the spear (lance) and the 'issuing *of* blood and water'. A net work *of* typological significations can be composed. Adam was given shape from the side of the virgin earth. Eve was carved *from* the side *of* Adam. *From* Eve the cause *of* slavery and death came out. But from the pierced side *of* Christ blood, signifying the Eucharistic blood, and water, signifying baptism, came out. It is this Baptism and Eucharist that give birth and nurture the children *of* the Church, the mystical body *of* Christ. Hence, *from* Adam's side came Eve and death. But *from* the side *of* Christ came the Church and life. Thus by a salvific synchronic understanding *of* this particular episode illumines the inherent relationship between the created world, Adam, Christ, Church and the individual Christians. Such networks *of* salvific realities can be comprehended only by the 'eye *of* faith'. Divine revelation aims at such enriched faith.

THE GREEK FATHERS

The early Fathers began to develop the Catholic doctrine of revelation on the basis of Scripture and Church tradition; but at the same they had to meet the situation created by the above-mentioned doctrinal and cultural currents. As a consequence the understanding of Revelation had necessarily to undergo a change. The main elements that constituted the theology of revelation are the following:

a) Revelation understood in terms of a reasonable doctrine.

This is the position of **Justin**. Being a philosopher he tries to show the reasonableness of Christianity to the pagans. He also tried to meet them in their field through the doctrine of the Logos. This also helped him to prevent losing whatever was true in the Gnostic position. He speaks of the Logos as the revelation of God as well as the revealer of God. Under the former aspect he is the one through whom God creates the world. As revealer, he acts in the history of the Jewish people especially through the prophets. The human beings share in the Divine Logos. In every person there is a seed, 'a germ of the Logos'. The wisdom of the philosophers is the participation in the Logos who was to become man in Jesus Christ. All who live by reason therefore, are in some sense Christians (1 Apol. 46); but those who are ignorant of the Incarnate Word, have only a partial knowledge and, therefore fall into many contradictions (2 Apol.8, 10).

b) Historicity of revelation explained by showing the continuity of the O.T historical revelation in the N.T. with Christ as the recapitulation. **Irenaeus** is the defender of this position against the Gnostics. God in his view, gradually through the eternal Logos, prepares human beings by stages to receive the 'solid food of Christian revelation'. He recognizes three distinct testaments prior to Christ: those of Adam, Noah, and Moses. In the fourth testament, as he calls it, the divine Word himself becomes visible, appearing in the flesh and bringing to a head in his own person the religious history of mankind (Adv. Haer. IV, 9, 1; 34, 1; 36, 1). After the ascension, Christ's visibility is perpetuated in the Church. He, therefore, affirms the unity of the Old and the New Testament, but the uniqueness of the New Testament cannot be overlooked because, while the Old Testament is only a promise, the New Testament is realization, accomplishment, and the gift of the Incarnate Word (Adv. Haer IV, 34).

c) Revelation is the fulfillment of the universal aspiration of mankind. **Clement** of Alexandria recognizes three great testaments: Pagan philosophy, the Jewish Law, and the Christian Gospel. All three derive from the one and the same Logos. Just as the Law prepared the Hebrews to accept the teaching of Christ, so philosophy educated the Greeks, predisposing them better to receive the good news of the Gospel (Strom. VII, 5, 5). Not only among the Hebrews but also among the Greeks likewise, God stirred up prophets (Strom. VI, 42, 3; 110, 3; 153, 1). Christians have the advantage both over the Greeks and the Jews because they acknowledge as their teacher in Christ the Incarnate Logos himself, who illumines the believing soul with his own light (Protr. 68, 4).

d) Revelation is the manifestation of God who is incomprehensible for human beings. The **Capadocian Fathers**, especially **Basil the Great** and **Gregory of Nyssa** dwelt on the divine incomprehensibility in a way that contributed permanently to the Christian theology of the mystery. **St. John Chrysostom** also gave his contribution to the understanding of revelation, as mystery-filled, by his famous homilies '*On the incomprehensibility of God*' which are remarkable for their vivid description of human being's sense of the holy at the approach of the divine. But God in his condescension accommodates Himself to the weakness of His creatures.

We notice here already a change from the biblical understanding of revelation. From personalism there is a movement towards intellectualism; from the historical particularism to a wider universalism and finally from a close personal experience to a mysterious transcendentalism. These will leave deep impressions on subsequent theology.

D. LATIN FATHERS

We shall speak here of **Tertullian** and of **St. Augustine** as the two representatives of the Latin fathers. **Tertullian** considers Christianity as truth and paganism as error. The truths that are found in pagan philosophy are the fruits of borrowings from the Old and the New Testaments. He admits two sources of the knowledge of God: from created nature and spontaneous testimony of the soul. But this knowledge is imperfect and mixed with error. Revelation and specially revelation in the New Testament is without any error. God sent His Son, 'the Light and Guide of our human race, who brought us all truth (Apolog. 21, 7). Christ communicated these truths to his Apostles. He taught them all the truth either personally or through the Spirit. There are no other mediators of revelation besides the apostles; hence with them the action of revelation is terminated (De Prescript. 35, 3-4). The main concern of Tertullian is not about whether there is a Christian revelation or about its content, but where it is to be found and how it is to be got. His answer to this problem is the following: Christ is the source of truth; he hands it down to the apostles. They are its mediators; the apostles hand it down to the Churches founded by them. They are its depositary; the apostolic Churches are the receptacle of this tradition; to learn the truth we need only to ask them (Adv. Marc. 1, 21). With this position, we must admit that Tertullian reduces revelation to a collection of truths.

In Augustine the western patristic tradition reaches its highest peak. He combined a vigorous speculative intellect with a deep introspective piety. Hence the two extreme positions in revelation theology, namely, revelation as an exclusively intellectual reality or as an exclusively emotional experience is to a certain extent eliminated in his position. Augustine makes use of the Johannine terminology in his theology of revelation. Christ is the centre of all revelation. He distinguishes three stages in the revelatory activity of God. From Adam until Moses, Old and the New Testaments were hidden. In the time of Moses, Old Covenant was made manifest, and in it was hidden the New. Finally, when Christ came, the New Covenant was openly revealed (De Civitate Dei XI, 3).

With regard to the term 'revelation', Augustine uses it at times for extraordinary manifestation such as the visions and ecstasies of which one reads in the Holy Scriptures. These revelations, he says, could be merely sensory (and thus imperfect) or intellectual (in which case they were perfect)'. Augustine also uses the term 'revelation' more widely to designate any divine

illumination, which comes to the mind through prayerful study and consideration of things obscurely known (De Gratia Christi I, 10, 1; 14, 15).

In the light of these two uses of the term we may construct a theology of revelation according to Augustine. It is not the mere abstract communication of truth. It is the communication of truth accompanied by divine illumination. God is not only the truth, but He is also the light by which truth is known. That is why Augustine, 'while speaking of Christ as revelation uses the Johannine terms of 'Way, Truth, Light and Life'. It is for this reason that we say for Augustine revelation is not so much the external communication of the gospels as the inner light by which persons are enabled to believe it. In his famous work *The City of God* Augustine says that the preacher would herald the Gospel in vain unless God were to open the hearts of the hearers. "If He does not rule and guide the mind by His interior grace, no preaching of truth will profit a man" (De Civit. Dei 15,6)

The contribution of Augustine to the understanding of revelation consists in his insistence on the divine action in the revelatory event. This is not only historical, communitarian in experience, but also personal to each one. In revelation the Holy Spirit works not only in the historical events, but also in the one who receives the revelation. This is an important element because here we have a deeper understanding of what revelation means as an event of personal experience.

3. Revelation in Scholastic Theology

The term '*revelation*' in most of the medieval theologians continues to be used as in St. Augustine, to designate any kind of divine illumination, including what we should now regard as falling within the ambit of purely natural knowledge. This is the position of Scotus Erigena (810-877) who affirms that only under the guidance of faith does reason fully come into its own and Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) who gave the famous formula '*Credo ut intelligam*' (I believe that I may understand). Only in the high Scholasticism of the thirteenth century does 'revelation' (A. Dulles, *Revelation Theology* pg. 38) become restricted to strictly supernatural knowledge.

Basing themselves on the Augustinian theory of illumination, the scholastics distinguish two types of enlightenment of the human mind. One is the divine illumination: this is called *supernatural revelation* and the effect of this is to make the human persons accept truth on the authority of God: this is called *faith*. The other is the inner light of human reason: this is called *natural revelation* and the effect of this is to make the human persons accept truth because of its reasonableness: this is called *natural knowledge*. The main authors of this theology of Revelation are:

a) *St. Bonaventure* who develops the theory of inner illumination by God and makes almost no distinction between inspiration and revelation.

b) *St. Thomas*. He too, holds that a divinely infused light is needed to adhere to the truth, but unlike most of the Augustinians, he does not normally use the term 'revelation' to designate this interior illumination. Thus the idea of revelation, in St. Thomas, becomes more objectified than in Augustine and his school (C.G. L, I, c.4). The objectification of revelation took place through the stages of history: before the Law to Abraham, in the form of promise; under the Law to Moses, in the form of the Covenant and in the form of grace to the Apostles through the teachings of Christ (S.Th 2a

2ae, q.174, a. 6, c). This however is not to be restricted merely to the propositions, but to the whole revelatory event. For, St. Thomas the truths of revelation are above the possibility of any demonstrative proof for their validity. Hence they need external signs, such as miracles and prophecies for their confirmation. This is the divine seal which attests the divine origin of the doctrine he preaches. God authenticates the message not only with the external activities of miracles, but also His grace is active within the listeners producing in them the conviction regarding the truthfulness of the message.

St. Thomas observes that God helps us to accept the revelation by a threefold aid: through an inner call, through the outer teaching and preaching, through miracles. He distinguishes two types of revelation: natural and supernatural: the former is the revelation of truths of the natural order, concerning God and our relationship with Him. Revelation is not absolutely necessary for knowing these truths; however, it is morally necessary because left to human reason, few would have managed to know them; those who would come to know them will have to go through a long and painful search; and finally the truths that they arrive at would be burdened with error and inaccuracy. The second order of revelation is an exigency that comes from the new order of salvation, or the supernatural order of salvation to which God has called the humankind. To achieve this revelation is absolutely necessary. "Saint Thomas thus conceives of revelation as the activity of the God of salvation who freely and gratuitously furnishes man with all the truths necessary and useful to the pursuit of his supernatural end. The revealed truth is primarily and essentially the knowledge of God, which is inaccessible to reason and consequently can be known only by way of revelation" (Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* pg. 160).

c) *John Duns Scotus*: Revelation is the original transmission of supernatural truth from God, given to prophets and apostles. The doctrine of the Church rests on this original communication. (Avery Dulles, ' *Revelation Theology*, London 1969, pg. 44). Scotus makes a distinction between the knowledge which God has of Himself and the knowledge man has of Him through revelation. In other words he maintains that non revelation can give us a complete and exhaustive knowledge of God. In other words God is not the adequate object of any created intellect. Since God is love everything has its origin in love. Hence when God reveals he communicates His love through the truths which He reveals.

In the early scholastic period, we find a definite step taken with regard to the changed understanding of revelation. The noetic element gains predominance. This current of thought will dominate the whole theological thinking on revelation for the centuries to come until Vatican II will try a break through.

4. Revelation Theology of the Council of Trent

The doctrine of the Council of Trent was very much conditioned by the positions taken by the reformers. Both Luther and Calvin look at human beings in need of redemption with a pessimistic outlook. For **Luther** the human persons are weighed down by their sins and they cannot get out of it except through a positive intervention of God in their lives. This God cannot be apprehended by reason, but only by an act of trust. The biblical word produces in the human beings this trust. In this way it gives them the sense of the presence of God and this is revelation. The Gospel that is proclaimed contains

promises and these promises inspire trust in God. I

Calvin faces the problem from a more intellectual standpoint. Although the human persons can know God through the works of creation, they can never attain to this except through the help of God because of their fallen condition. Revelation through the Holy Scriptures gives them the capacity to correct their understanding of creation. It also gives them knowledge of those truths, which they would never be able to attain. The Scripture contains the whole of revelation. But humanity needs the help of the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Scriptures.

In the position of the reformers we find that they are on the same line of thought regarding revelation, as the scholastics in as much as their preoccupation about revelation is also revelation as knowledge. They differ from the scholastics in this that they restrict this knowledge only to exclusive communication from God to the individual. The individual is passive. This passivity is extended to the community of individuals who are expected to transmit this revelation, namely the Church. They know nothing more about revelation except what is contained in the book. The Bible becomes the book, which contains the revelation of God, the knowledge that God wants to communicate to humanity.

The doctrine of the Council, being a counter-reformation measure, is meant for condemning the errors of the Reformers. Hence, retaining the concept of revelation as knowledge, the Council makes the following statements:

- a) The revelation is the source of all truth of salvation and moral discipline.
- b) This revelation is contained not only in the Bible but also in non-written tradition

The attention has been shifted totally from revelation as an event, to revelation as truths. The task of theology of the subsequent period will be mainly to defend and justify the message of revelation rather than to understand the meaning of the event of revelation.

5. Post- Tridentine Period

The Catholic and Protestant theology of revelation during this period tend to become merely propositional. The Catholic view that revelation is contained in Scripture and Tradition makes them turn their attention to the knowledge and defense of its content against the heretics. They never look at it as an event by which the mystery of God enters into the lives of human beings. The Protestant position is similar to this with the only difference that these stick to the propositions of the Bible and absolutize them. They, too have a propositional view of revelation. Naturally, these positions create reactions in the philosophers and scientists of the 16th century and 17th century. This absolutization of Scripture and Tradition led, at least to some extent, to a reaction, attributing to human reason an absolute value. If everything is already known, the human reason can know nothing more. What it can do is only to defend the acquired knowledge. In fact we find that both in Protestant and Catholic theology reason was made use of for mere apologetic purposes. The reaction is an effort to uphold reason. Thus we see the rise of Intellectualism.

- a) Intellectualism. The two main trends that protested against this static absolutism of the sources of revelation are:

i) *Deism*: Their main tenets are the following: 1) Revelation adds nothing substantially to what one knows from reason; it is the re- publication of the law of nature; 2) Revelation is reasonable; there is nothing in it, which is not clear. If there is anything mysterious, it comes from non-authentic sources; 3) We see here that revelation is reduced to a set of truths.

ii) *Rationalism*: **Kant** manifests skepticism regarding the historical knowledge of Divine realities as claimed by Christian revelation; but he does not deny the possibility of knowledge by the intellect. Intellect, as pure reason cannot establish the existence of transcendent realities: the idea of soul, of freedom and of God which are the indispensable basis of morality and religion are the postulates of intellect as practical reason. Kant respected the Bible to the extent that he could read into it his own philosophical theories. Historical revelation or Bible is a means for communicating the data of practical reason in a popular symbolic fashion and with the sanction of external, social authority. Divine revelation which gives religious precepts is the data of practical reason and not of pure reason.

b) *Anti-Intellectualism*: This was a rebellion against rationalism. From intellectualism, we go to a radical anti-intellectualism. The root of this is found in the absence of personalism. We have two types of anti-intellectualists: One group that, depreciating human reason, finds truths in human feeling and subjectivity (Sentimentalism). The other instead, finds truths in a mechanical communication from God to human beings (Traditionalism).

i) **Sentimentalism**

Schliermacher (1768-1834) based his philosophy of religion not upon speculative reason, but upon the sentiments of heart. The human beings experience their total dependence on the changeless, the necessary and the infinite. This gives rise to the idea of God. Revelation is an experience of transformation in the human being's religious consciousness. Every religion is based on the uniqueness or originality of this fact, which lies at the foundation of a religious community; Christian religion rests upon the unique God-consciousness of Christ. For him the content of revelation is not dogma or doctrine, but immediate awareness; theology is human being's expression of and commentary on this consciousness or awareness of God.

Kierkegaard (1813 -1855) Accidental historical truths can never serve as proofs for the eternal truths of reason; the transition by which it is proposed to base an eternal truth upon historical testimony is a leap. Christian revelation being a sheer paradox cannot be made plausible on philosophic or scientific grounds; it demands the existential commitment of blind faith. Authority is the qualitatively decisive point in the acceptance of revelation. This is because human beings are unlike God, and therefore their reason cannot, of itself, bridge the gap. Revelation demands personal adherence to the teacher himself. In faith the disciple owes everything, including his very capacity to assent, to the teacher.

ii) **Fideism and Traditionalism.**

They manifest a depreciation of the powers of human reason. They maintained that supernatural faith was absolutely required in order for human beings to perceive fundamental

truths of a religious nature, such as the existence and attributes of God, the immortality of the soul. The principle exponent of *fideism* is **Bautain** (1796-1867). *Traditionalism* may be regarded as a particular form of fideism. They maintain that in order that human beings may come to the knowledge of God, they needed at least a general revelation. God made such a revelation at the beginning of time, and this primitive revelation was passed down through oral tradition, and thus constituted the organ of general revelation (**De Bonald** 1754-1840). Besides this, there is a kind of *moderate traditionalism*, which admitted that human reason was not entirely powerless in the realm of religious truths, but it was at least morally incapable of discovering some of the most important precepts of moral law (the preambles of faith).

c) Attempts at a Compromise between Intellectualism and Anti-Intellectualism:

i) **Semi-rationalism**: They maintained that reason could demonstrate by intrinsic arguments all the truths of revelation. **George Hermes** (1775-1831) held that revelation was the mode of knowledge, which the ignorant should practice owing to their incapacity to discern the truth about God through scientific demonstration; but the wise could substitute clear philosophic knowledge for the obscurity of faith. Even for the wise, grace would still be necessary to bring about the total submission of their lives to the truths of revelation. **Anton Gunther** (1783-1863) held that human reason was omniscient and denied that revelation would be absolutely necessary to manifest any truth whatever. Theological progress in his view consisted in a reduction of faith to rational knowledge through a deeper understanding of the divinely attested truth. **Jacob Frohschammer** (1821-1893) held that pure reason could never comprehend the mysteries of revelation. But he added that reason, which is intrinsically modified and developed under the influence of Christian revelation, could do so.

ii) **John Henry Newman** (1801-1890) was chiefly preoccupied about the dogmatic and authoritative character of revelation. In opposition to the prevalent Rationalism he insisted on the mysteriousness of revealed dogmas.

iii) **Matthias Joseph Sheehan** (1835-1888) developed the doctrine of mystery in opposition to the rationalists and semirationalists. He contributed to the Trinitarian understanding of revelation. According to his view, revelation always occurs through the Son as Logos, but its acceptance requires an interior enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, which likewise deserves to be called revelation.

d) **The Position of the Church: *The Syllabus of Errors***: Pius IX in his syllabus of errors (1864) summarized a number of earlier condemnations. It reasserted the following statements against rationalism.

- i) The human reason is not the sovereign normative value for human beings
- ii) Divine revelation is not increased through the mere development of man's rational life
- iii) It is in harmony with the reason
- iv) The historical validity of the biblical prophecies and miracles is affirmed
- v) Against semi-rationalism it denies that human reason, even historically educated could demonstrate all the Christian dogmas.

6.

6. I Vatican Council

I Vatican Council came closer than any previous Church Council to setting forth an authoritative Catholic view of revelation. In its third session (April 4, 1870) it adopted the Dogmatic Constitution '*Dei Filius*' on Catholic Faith, which on the whole reaffirms the main position of St. Thomas on revelation in so far as it had become the common property of the post - Tridentine Scholastic tradition. It presents revelation in terms of a teacher-pupil relationship. The Constitution '*Dei Filius*' is a document, which almost exclusively deals with the existence of revelation and not of its nature:

- a) There are two ways by which human being can arrive at knowledge of God: *natural and supernatural*
- b) It is possible for human beings, by the natural light of their reason through the medium of creatures (*per ea quae facta sunt*) to arrive at certain knowledge of God. This goes against: atheism and positivism and traditionalism.
- c) Then it deals with the supernatural revelation:
 - i) The fact of positive and supernatural revelation is affirmed.
 - ii) God is the author of this revelation. It is the free and gratuitous operation of His will.
 - iii) This divine initiative was motivated

By His wisdom: As Creator and Provident God it was fitting that He makes all humans know the religious truths without difficulty, with certitude and without the admixture of error. As the author of the Supernatural order, for God raised them to this order, He had to make known to them the end for which He raised them up.

By His Goodness: This communication is a sign of God's effusive charity

- d) The Material Object of Revelation is God & His decrees
 - i) God, His existence, His attributes, the intimate life of three persons
 - ii) His Decrees concerning the creation, government, elevation, Incarnation, Redemption.
 - iii) The human race is the beneficiary of this revelation.
 - iv) Supernatural revelation is a process of continuous and progressive action of God in the World.
- e) Necessity of Revelation
 - i) Revelation is necessary because God has ordered human beings towards a supernatural end.
 - ii) This necessity, however, is dependent on the salvific will of God. It is not an absolute necessity.
 - iii) Revelation of the truths of natural order is morally necessary because through revelation everyone can know such truths with facility, with firm certitude and with no admixture of error.
- f) The Possibility of Revelation. The human beings can receive the knowledge through revelation and this does not go against his nature as a being endowed with intelligence and free will.

g) The Sources of Revelation are Scripture & Tradition

h) The human beings must respond to the revealing God because

i) They depend entirely upon God as their Creator and Lord.

ii) Motive for their faith is the authority of the revealing God,
This distinguishes faith from science

i) Revelation, being supernatural, contains also 'mysteries, i.e., truths that are inaccessible to our human reason

j) God has given exterior proofs of His revelation namely, divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies

The doctrine of Vatican I must be understood against the background of its times. The Constitution *Dei Filius* is intended less as a positive and balanced expression of the nature of revelation than as an answer of a Church to certain philosophical and theological systems deemed incompatible with the Church's dogmatic heritage. In comparison with the more concrete and historical point of view of Trent and some earlier Councils, Vatican I looks upon revelation from an abstract and almost metaphysical point of view. Its teaching has remarkable conceptual clarity but lacks the biblical and existential tone which Vatican II sought to restore.

7. Towards a Personalistic Approach in Revelation Theology

The prepositional character of the revelation theology of post Tridentine period was coming to an end with the Ist Vatican Council. Although the Council had shown some indication to formulate revelation as God's self-communication, there was no sign that it intended to present revelation as a communication on a clearly personal level. This was to be the task of the II Vatican Council. The movement towards this re-thinking on revelation began almost immediately after Vatican I. Since some of these movements, due to the extreme style of formulation that they adopted, seemed to deny the statements of Vatican I, they were considered as opposed to the official theology of revelation of the same Council. The movement called *Modernism* belongs to this category. Instead, some Catholic theologians such as Blondel accepted the personalistic approach and tried to formulate it without denying the prepositional presentation of Vatican I.

A) Modernism

Although it flowered in the first decade of the twentieth century, Modernism in substance is a Catholic echo of Protestant theology of the late 19th century. They were labeled Modernists because they wanted to adapt Catholicism to what was valid in modern thoughts, even at the price of a certain discontinuity with the Church's own past teaching and institutional forms. It practically denied the transcendent character of revelation, turning it into a purely human experience. The true formulation of Modernism can be found more clearly in the documents of the Church that condemn the movement than in the writings of its protagonists themselves. They insisted on human experience, meaning by it merely psychological consciousness and not the totality of it.

i) Sources of Modernism

- a) *The Philosophy of Kant* reduced religion to a mere moral obligation, imposed on him by the practical reason. There is no revelation in his system in the sense of a God who speaks to human persons, in order to communicate to them the salvific knowledge that leads them to action.
- b) *Schliermacher's* concept of revelation as the spontaneous and subjective realization of the presence of God, springing forth from the feeling of dependence on God was also an important contribution to the modernistic concept of revelation.
- c) *Sabatier* thought of revelation as an act by which the awareness of God in the human person is created, purified and progressively made clear in the individual and in humanity. This revelation is expressed first of all in images, then under the form of concepts and judgments, which the Church can approve and receive as dogmas. Since those dogmas merely are symbolic expressions, they are subject to evolution; they therefore, vary as a consequence, with the varying ages.

ii) The Modernists

- a) **Alfred Loisy**: We shall synthesize in his own words the concept of revelation that he had.

What is called revelation can only be man's acquired consciousness of his relationship to God. What is the Christian revelation in its principle and point of departure, except the perception in the soul of Christ of the relationship by which he himself was united to God and of that which binds all men to their heavenly Father (*Author d 'un petit livre* (1903) pg.195).

Dogmas for Loisy are a kind of scientific commentary on faith enunciated by the Church in its effort to mediate between faith itself and the scientific thinking of a given era. Dogmas are necessarily relative to the stage of intellectual and cultural development of those for and by whom they were formulated. To sum up, for Loisy, revelation is not a doctrine offered to our faith, unchanging deposit of truths, but rather an intuition and experimental perception, always in development (always becoming) of our relationship with God. Revelation, like dogma and theology, always evolves, it is always happening (*Latourelle*, pg.276).

- b) **Tyrell**. His idea of revelation is set forth in his book 'Through Scylla and Charybdis' (1907). Revelation as he conceived it consists in a quasi-mystical experience and is not to be identified with the intellectual component of that experience. The Gospel is a power, not a science; Christianity is not a body of definitions and affirmations divinely guaranteed, but life. Revelation cannot be communicated but at most can be occasioned, by preaching and writing. The dogmas of the Church are not themselves revelation, but a merely human reaction to it. They serve to protect it, but are not endowed with scientific and philosophical infallibility. Tyrell's many sound insights are vitiated by his excessive distrust of the conceptual element in revelation and by his predominantly pragmatic attitude towards the Church's teaching authority.

iii) Anti-modernist Documents

a) *The Decree 'Lamentabili'* (July 3, 1907): Three statements of Loisy are condemned.

- > Revelation can be nothing more than the awareness man acquires of his relation to God
- > As a consequence the dogmas, which the Church proposes as, revealed are not truths, which have come down from heaven but a certain interpretation of religious facts, which the human mind has acquired, by laborious effort.
- > The revelation, which constitutes the object of Catholic faith, was not closed with the apostles.

b) The Encyclical *Pascendi* (8th Sept.1907). It is a perfect synthesis of the modernist teachings.

- Philosophically Modernism professed agnosticism and doctrine of vital immanence. Theologically religion is the blossoming of the religious sentiment.
- In theology they adapt the philosophical principles of immanence, symbolism and evolution to faith.

c) The Motu Proprio: "*Sacrarum Antistitum*" (1st Sept. 1910) and the anti-modernist oath.

- Historical Christ founded the Church, as the guardian and mistress of the revealed word
- Faith is not a blind feeling, but an adherence of the intelligence to the truth revealed by God Revelation is the Word of testimony.

B. Blondel (1861- 1941)

The most constructive Catholic response to the modernist movement was of Blondel, a philosopher by profession. Seeking a via media between a modernist immanentism and an ultramontane extrinsicism, Blondel developed what he called the "method of immanence". His principle of immanence clearly presupposes that revelatory knowledge must be partly produced by the individual believer in his normal movement by which he passes from Faith to Dogma rather than from Dogma to Faith.

There is a basic inadequacy in the human persons, which makes them seek something uniquely necessary, but at the same time inaccessible to their human action. Then there is posited a hypothesis, the Christian supernatural order. He makes an act of faith in this. The historical and objective character of this Christian order will become meaningful later on because it will appear as a real answer to his search. Hence, there is a subjective beginning, a hypothetical answer and an objective expression: Search - faith - dogma.

8. Revelation Theology in the XX Century

A) Protestant Theology of Revelation in the XX Century:

In the first two decades of the century a number of Protestant theologians became convinced that Christianity had arisen not through a special intervention from on high

but through a syncretistic union of religions and philosophies already in existence - Jewish, Oriental and Hellenistic.

i) Scholars of Comparative Religion

Troeltsch (1865-1923). He accepted the biblical portrait of Jesus as an overpowering instance of God's revelatory presence. In Christ we revere the highest revelation of God accessible to human beings, but all the religions rested on supernatural revelation in the sense of an ineffable, extraordinary experience associated with some Powerful religious personality.

Rudolf Otto (1869-1937): Path to the divine is through the human being's inner longings and sentiments rather than through rational argument and doctrinal revelation. This numinous experience involves a paradoxical fusion of terror and allurement (*Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*). When combined with the ethically good, the numinous coincides with holy. For Otto all human religions are based on revelation. Christianity is the supreme manifestation of the holy and all the other religious experiences must be evaluated from the vantage point of Christian faith. The dogmatic statements have only evocative symbolic value.

ii) Transcendentalism

Karl Barth (1886-1968): He maintains that there is a contrast between religion and revelation. The former is the outstretch of the sinful, fallen human being towards God. The latter is the act by which the utterly transcendent and unattainable God graciously comes to us. Christianity is seen as revelation, that is, as a downward movement from God. What Christ came to give is not a new form of piety or religious experience, but a revelation of God, the totally other. Revelation crushes human pride. It is an act of judgment and it comes to us in Christ. His resurrection is God's 'no' to all human possibilities. God effects a new creation in Christ. He rejects rationalism because it rejects the event-character of revelation. He rejects the new historicism of revelation because it overlooks the divine dimension of revelation. The content of revelation, the word of God, comes to us in three forms, as revealed word, as written word, and as preached word, respectively present in Christ, Bible and the Church.

Emil Brunner (1889-1966): The specific quality of biblical revelation, according to Brunner, is that God comes to us as absolute subject. As such he cannot be comprehended by conceptual, objectifying knowledge. He encounters us interpersonally through an event that inwardly transforms us. Revelation achieves itself in the inner change by which the recipient makes the absolute surrender of faith. Faith differs from every other form of knowledge since, instead of giving us mastery of an object; it places us at the disposal of the Absolute Subject. The contents of faith, therefore, cannot be legitimately expressed in propositional form. Dogma is a hellenization of the Gospel. It substitutes speculative knowledge for proclamation.

Bultmann (1884-1976): The subject and object of revelation are nothing less than the living God Himself in so far as He summons us to authentic existence. Revelation cannot consist in historical facts, abstract doctrines, or timeless myths. It is the divine action whereby God meets the human person in the preaching of the word.

iii) Existentialism

Paul Tillich (1886-1965): He took his starting point from the human being's existential situation, that of finiteness and anxiety, which gives rise to concern. The

humans seek to find the ground of their being. Revelation is the leap whereby it is given to us to encounter God as the ground of our being. As its objective correlative this extraordinary apprehension (ecstasy) demands an extraordinary event (miracle), which is the sign of the presence of the divine. In summary, revelation may be called the self-manifestation of God through miracle and ecstasy. Revelation may occur at any time or in any place, but the final and universal revelation is that which occurs in Jesus as the Christ.

iv) **Oscar Cullman** (1902-1999): His famous books are *Christ and Time, Salvation in History*. Biblical revelation has its primary theme God's redemptive action in history. Even God is not an object of revelation except in function of his salvific activity. The Bible tells the story of God's redemptive dealings with his select people - a story that progressively narrows down to focus on Christ as the representative of mankind, and then expands from Pentecost as the message of salvation is carried out to the ends of the earth. For Cullman dogmas are a correct and necessary inference from the Bible, but are not themselves revealed.

B. Catholic Theology of Revelation in the XX Century

Catholic Theology since the middle ages insisted on the autonomy of the Church over human sciences, the permanence and stability of the revealed truth, the human being's obligation to submit to the word of God, as something delivered from outside, sealed by miraculous guarantees. In the anti-modernist world it insisted more vehemently than ever before on supernaturalism, irreformability and transcendence. This situation had to face the modern world, with its autonomy of science, sensitivity to historical change and creativity of the human spirit. This is the context in which Catholic theology of revelation had to make its appearance.

i) Latin Manuals:

Pesch (1853-1925) distinguishes between natural and supernatural revelation. Natural revelation is communicated by realities, supernatural revelation by words. **Diekmann** gives the definition of revelation as "*locutio Dei attestans*" (God speaking as a witness) and then proceeds to elaborate this in terms of classical four causes of Aristotelian Scholasticism. For **Chenu** (1895-1990) God, in giving himself through statements of faith, becomes more interior to us than we are to ourselves. Seeking to overcome the aridity and abstractedness of the usual Scholastic analysis of revelation, Chenu stressed, the concrete realities of salvation history proclaimed in the Bible. He must be praised as one of the thinkers that helped to liberate the Catholic theology of revelation from the sterile conceptualism into which it had fallen. **Mersch** (1890-1940) maintained that revelation cannot be scrutinized merely from outside like an object. It is a simple aspect of the communication of divine life, which is given to the believers through Christ, the unique Mediator. The formulas, however, in which revelation is articulated, play a vital part in Christian life. Just as the soul cannot come into existence without body so the life of faith cannot come into being without sensible signs, words and gestures.

ii) Some prominent Catholic Theologians

Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955): Christ is considered as the principle of unity and finality of the whole universe. He touched the universe not merely at a particular period of history, but penetrated it to the depth and in some sense divinized the world.

The divine light was reflected not in Christianity alone, but in other religions as well. In our age the various religions are moving towards a convergence. The object of this convergence is the universal Christ. This is the only convergence possible for the world and the only possible form of a religion of the future. But he emphatically said that Christianity was the axis towards which all must converge. **De Lubac** (1896-1991): Revelation could not be exhaustively stated in doctrinal formulas. The original deposit of revelation consisted in a concrete and vital adherence to the person of Christ. Revelation was a summons to the kingdom. Revelation gives new eyes to those who accept it and unfolds a vista of new universe. **Danielou** (1905-1974): In other religions he finds a form of cosmic revelation. God's self-affirmation through nature, constitutes his initial self-disclosure and hence the point of departure for positive, biblical revelation. This takes place through a series of historical events. God's acts in history are known not by ordinary observation, but only with the help of a divine activity, within the human spirit. The testimony of those who have come into contact with God's revelation in history contains astonishing evidences and thus become, even for those who have not shared in it, one of the reasons for believing in God.

Karl Rahner (1904-1984). He has a fresh approach to the understanding of salvation history and consequently also of revelation in its relation to the life of the Trinity, to secular history and to the history of religions in general. Revelation is the salvific intervention of God in human history. This has many expressions in the history of religion. The question here is regarding the uniqueness of Christian revelation and its specific role in God's plan of salvation. The revelation event has two sides: on the one hand it constitutes the supernaturally elevated (supernatural existential) state of humankind (the universal plan of salvation); on the other hand revelation takes through historical mediation. In Christian revelation God's self communication in which the saving revelation consists, takes place through the intermediary of a particular historical event; transcendence makes history when the Spirit effects the incarnation of the Logos. By the power of the same Spirit, his revelation continues through history until it is fully revealed at the Parousia. At the same time it must be admitted that supernatural salvation is operative everywhere in history. It has to be realized in the lives of individuals through an act of faith manifested in the acceptance of the historical manifestation of the divine in Jesus Christ who takes away all ambiguities in the human responses to God's revelation in universal history. (Karl Rahner, *On the Concept of Revelation* in K. Rahner & J. Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition*)

iii) Magisterium: ***Humani Generis*** is the encyclical of Pope Pius XII. It cautioned the theologians against the extreme positions to which the effort to restate the dogmas and Christian revelation in terms of modern philosophies would lead, and praised the great merit of scholastic theology for its firm grasp of unassailable principles. But at the same time the Pope noted the importance of the biblical movement in the understanding of theology.

9. Revelation Theology of Vatican II

A. The Main Factors that Contributed Towards the New Theology of Revelation:

i) **Scriptural Movement**: Guardini has written that only revelation can tell us what revelation is. If this is true, then biblical studies of the recent past could not but have played a central role in the understanding of revelation. The expression "locutio Dei" (speech of God)

which was found in all the manuals of theology is seen in the light of the biblical meaning of the Word of God. It is an event and not a statement. It is the act of God's self-disclosure in history. Revelation, 'locutio Dei' in this view is not simply a communication of knowledge, but a dynamic process by which the divine persons invite human persons to enter into the realm of relationship. The biblical movement has thus opened out the historical, personal, social and eschatological dimensions of revelation.

ii) **Philosophy**: The phenomenology of language and symbolism, the currents of personalist and existentialist thought, the study of history and cosmic evolution have all contributed to a new vision of the theology of revelation. The twentieth century philosophy strives to avoid the division of reality into subject-object; natural-supernatural and shows that the human relationship takes place on the level of persons in their totality. This will show that there is a very close similarity between the modern biblical understanding of revelation and the modern philosophical concept of personal relationship. The revelation theology of Vatican II has been very much influenced by this modern philosophical approach to reality.

iii) **The Catechetical Movement**: The great need of making theology more pastoral gave a new direction in the method of approach in revelation theology as is evident especially from the kerygmatic theology of Jungmann etc. Catechetical and liturgical movements have shown that revelation has to be present, personal, social happening.

iv) **Pastoral Character** of the Church's Mission: The Church has received revelation in order to proclaim it to the world, to all peoples. She has to proclaim it to the people of today, agnostics and believers, non-Christians and atheists. She has to do this in a spirit of dialogue. This demands a new way of understanding the revelation on the part of the Christians.

B. II Vatican Council Constitution 'DEI VERBUM'

We can distinguish three aspects in the presentation of revelation: In the first place revelation is a pastoral action. The Word of God through revelation becomes the life of the world. Secondly, revelation is a Christological event. The word of God is the life, death and resurrection of Christ experienced, believed and proclaimed by the Church. Thirdly, revelation is a salvific event. The Word of God is a summons to salvation.

i) Revelation itself

- Christian Revelation proceeds from the divine benignity (the theological aspect of Revelation); it is an initiative on the part of God (Art.2.).
- Revelation is realized in Christ (the historical aspect of Revelation), announced by the prophets (Art.3) and completed by Christ during His earthly life (Art 4)
- The response of the human person to this Revelation (the anthropological aspect of this Revelation) consists in obedience of faith (Art. 5) which results in sharing divine life which goes beyond the comprehension and possibility of human beings (Art.6)

We shall now briefly describe this process by analyzing the various articles of this chapter.

A) Revelation, a personal act on the part of God (Art.2). The document '*Dei Verbum*' presents revelation as a *dialogue between God and human beings*. This can be clearly seen in the presentation of the Art.2.

- God is the prime agent of the revelation. He acts in revelation as person and directs His action to persons. He acts personally; this is shown in the words 'In his wisdom and goodness.' What He communicates is not His decrees and knowledge but Himself, His very person. He does this as an expression of his universal concern for human beings.
- On the other side of the revelation there is the human person who is approached by God and made to enter into intimacy with Him, by sharing His Trinitarian life. Revelation reaches into the personal centre of the human beings; it touches them in the depth of their being, in their individual faculties, in their will and understanding.
- This approach of God to human persons is made by means of a bridge. This bridge is Christ. He is the ideal and the only mediator in as much as He is both God and man. Hence we may say that the specificity of Christian revelation is in this: It is a communication from God to the human beings through the person of Christ.
- It is an act of friendship, a friendship that implies a full communication between the persons concerned. The invisible God does not only manifest Himself to us, but also donates Himself to us *ex abundantia caritatis* (out of his generous love). This donation is manifested in a profound personal relationship. which consists in making us enter into communion with Him. Here we see that revelation is not something purely speculative, which is directed to our intelligence, but something vital, which is directed to our whole person.
- It is a reality that has entered our human life acquiring a historic dimension. Although truths that are revealed are divine and therefore immovable, they are at the same time adapted to our condition. The truth of God becomes an Incarnate Truth. Being a historical reality there are two elements in this event: words and events. They are related in an organic manner. Works concretize His word and His words illumine His works. Revelation is a complete history, the history of salvation not a mere exposition of doctrines.

B) Revelation, its historical character verified in the Old Testament (Art. 3). We can distinguish the following stages in the historical realization of revelation

- *Creation*: the first act of revelation is the Word of God that creates (Jn. 1:3). God also manifests Himself through creation; the created realities are the images of God. They are the words of God.
 - *Fall of humankind*: The whole history of humankind, as it exists today, is under the sign of the fall, but God's revelation of salvation is present under the sign of promise and His care of human beings, manifested in His vigilant providence.
 - *Redemptive Alliance*: The realization of the promise takes place in 3 ways.
- *Calling of the people of God in Abraham*. He is the depository of the Promise of God. He is the first member of the elected race. Salvation is already present in him.
- *The pedagogical training of the people under Moses*. With him they are really made into a chosen race. The Word of God that was manifested to him is the guiding principle of the people through their long journey to the Promised Land.

- *The rest of the history of Israel is an anxious waiting for the Saviour.* The people are slowly being prepared by the Word of God to meet the Word Incarnate.

The universal character of revelations manifested in the creation and the particular historical character is manifested in the Old Testament. Both are linked together in the person of Abraham. The particular revelation is at the service of the universal revelation.

C. Revelation, its summit realized in the person of Christ (Art. 4). In the fullness of time the Word of God reaches its full realization in Christ.

- Christ is the Revealer par excellence in as much as He is the Word of God, the perfect reflection of the Divinity, through his incarnation he translated perfectly the Divine in human language and life.
- Revelation by Christ is the summit of divine communication to humankind. Christian revelation is perfect and does not need any complement.
- Christian Revelation will not disappear because the Spirit accompanies the Apostles whom Jesus commissioned to communicate this revelation to the whole world for all times.

D) Revelation is a word that is responded to (Art. 5)

Revelation is Word and this Word must be responded to. This response is called Faith. This faith establishes a personal contact with God, the revealer. This is the natural consequence of understanding revelation as dialogue.

- This faith is an act of obedience, a religious submission to God, after the example of Abraham.
- This faith is a total dedication of the human person to God.
- This faith is inspired and actuated by the help of the Holy Spirit.
- This faith can be perfected.
- This Faith is both a *donum* (gift) on the part of God and an *opus* (task) on the part of the human person.

E) Revelation, necessary for human person for salvation. (Art.7)

The necessity of revelation, according to Vatican II, should be seen in its personal character. It is also necessary because the understanding of the truths transcends the human intelligence, and human beings cannot know them only through natural means.

ii) Handing on of Divine Revelation

Just as revelation in itself has a triple dimension: theological Christological, and anthropological, its transmission in the course of time also has these three dimensions. This could not have been otherwise because the transmission of revelation is nothing else but the continued revelation in the course of human history.

A. The process of Transmission of revelation (Art. 7)

- If the salvation is for all peoples of all times, also revelation is meant for all

peoples of all times. This is possible only by a faithful transmission' of it through the centuries. The instruments of transmission should be closely connected with its original source

It is done through Christ - the Gospel.

It is done through the instrumentality of the Apostles. Christ transmits the revelation, through his representatives to other members of the human community.

The Apostles carry out this transmission by oral teaching, through institutions and cultic celebrations; they did it also by written Word.

The Apostolic ministry of transmitting revelation was continued by the Bishops whom they constituted as their successors.

The Written (the Scriptures) and the unwritten Tradition together form a mirror, which reflect God and His saving revelation. The Church contemplates it and remains faithful to it as she continues the mission entrusted to her.

B. The term 'tradition' is revelation that is handed down in the course of time (Art. 8)

- Here the word 'tradition' is used in terms of the whole evangelical message, which the apostles, received and entrusted to the Church to be guarded and transmitted until the end of time. This apostolic tradition is expressed in a special manner in the inspired book of the New Testament and it is brought into the living tradition of the Church, in its dogmas sacraments, and sanctified life. Hence here 'tradition' is not to be understood as a parallel source of revelation together with the Holy Scripture. The Holy Scriptures are also included here.
- Tradition is not a mechanical repetition of the teaching of the apostles; it is open and there is a growth in its understanding. It takes place through intellectual deepening of the content of Revelation, through authentic preaching, through the deepening of the spiritual experience of this Revelation. This is effected through the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the Church.
- The Witnesses of Tradition are the Fathers who show the richness of its content through their teaching and life witness, the liturgy, which makes present whole mystery of salvation by means of rites, the Church, which recognizes the full canon of the sacred books and interprets them.

C. The relationship between the Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures (Art. 9)

- Revelation is found both in Scripture and in Tradition which are not two distinct sources but two enjoined forms, both of which yield the whole revealed truth, the Gospel of Christ, according to modes that are different and proper to each. They are interconnected; they communicate with each other and constitute a unity.
- Both come from God and have the same ends assigned to them by Him: the transmission of revelation takes place differently in the Scripture and in the Tradition.
- Scripture is the Word of God consigned to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Church does not draw the certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scripture alone because the Scriptures are not a codification of integral revelation. Tradition hands on the entire Word of God assisted by Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Word, exercised by the Apostles and their successors. Scripture needs to be read and interpreted in the life of the Church, in conjunction with Tradition to be fully understood in all its significance and implications.

D. Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium of the Church (Art. 10)

- The Word of Christian revelation comes from God; it is transmitted through Scripture and Tradition; it is entrusted to the Church. This Church is understood as the whole people of God, not merely the hierarchy.
- The Magisterium of the hierarchy is entrusted with the task of interpreting this word authentically with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The Magisterium is exercised at the service of the Word. The Magisterium, therefore, is not above the word of God.
- All three are interdependent. The primary cause of this interdependence is the wisdom of God; the unifying principle of action is the Holy Spirit; the common purpose is the salvation of souls. All express the Word of God: tradition through the living transmission in the Church, Scripture through the written record in the Bible, the Magisterium through authoritative interpretation in the Church. The same Holy Spirit directs all these different expressions of the Word of God. Thus Magisterium can offer for belief a truth that has been divinely revealed and transmitted by Tradition, written or unwritten.

10. Revelation Theology in the Post-Vatican II Period

There are two significant documents of the Church which deal with the theology of Revelation. They continue the trend set by the Council in this area.

A) Catechism of the Catholic Church.

This document (1992 by Pope John Paul II) is one of the most important initiatives which the Church has taken in order to implement the Council directives. It begins with the existential situation of the human person in search of truth and happiness (1- 43). Revelation is the answer of God to this search. This answer is given by God by entering in human history (50 - 64), with its climax in the person of the rise Christ (66-67). The revealing action of Christ continues in history through the ministry of the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (76 - 133). Revelation is not, therefore, mere formulation of Divine truths, but a communication that is historical and personal. The historical and Christological character of Revelation presented by the Council is highlighted in this Catechism as essential elements for the understanding of Christian doctrine.

B) Fides et Ratio.

This is an encyclical published by Pope John Paul II in 1998. There is an entire chapter in this document which deals with Revelation. The encyclical speaks of the 'book of nature' as the first book of revelation. For the first time, the Magisterium presents creation not only as a witness or manifestation of God, but also as the first step in Revelation (no. 19). The bearing of this on the relation between God of Abraham and the God of the philosophers and the scientists is discussed. There is a relationship between philosophical access to God and Biblical revelation. Biblical revelation is the fulfillment of the decisive plan of love which began with

creation (no. 15). While stressing the historical character of revelation the encyclical affirms that God reveals Himself to humanity through the events of everyday life (n. 11 - 12). Finally the sacramental character of revelation is stressed. Revelation remains charged mystery, namely, it is a communication in symbols. The Mysteries are not merely truths beyond the grasp of human mind, but they are the expressions of communications in symbols. This is a very interesting insight in the understanding of revelation (n.13).

In the light of the understanding of Revelation according to the recent Church documents, especially of Vatican II and Papal Magisterium we can say that Christian Revelation has the following characteristics:

- i) Revelation is historical = it is an event
- ii) Revelation is symbolic = it is arrived at through the interpretation of events
- iii) Revelation is experiential = it is a personal communication
- iv) Revelation is interpersonal = it is an event of communion
- v) Revelation is communitarian = it results in the formation of a community.
- vi) Revelation takes place in words and deeds.
- vii) Revelation has its climax in Christ.
- viii) Revelation will have its consummation when history will be fulfilled, when all human beings will have met Christ and entered into communion with Him and with one another and thus built up a perfect community of communion, in which faith will have become love.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN - REVELATION

1. THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

The analysis of the constitution "Dei Verbum" has shown that we cannot reduce the fundamental Christian reality; revelation, to a mere collection of truths. "It would be wrong to view this revelation as a vast system of cut and dry propositions and truths. It is primarily a message and a light. God's light on our life, our history, on good and evil, on death, on God Himself... It is God's view of our reality" (Dutch Cat. p.291). Revelation is an act of self-communication on the part of God in order to establish a relationship between Him and the human person. Since human beings live and act in history, this self-communication or revelation cannot but take place in human history. Therefore history is both a sign and the instrument of His revelation.

A. Revelation in The Old Testament is Historical

The revelation of the Old Testament is the interpretation of the historical events of Israel in the light of God. This is clear from the following considerations on the Old Testament.

a) The main expressions of the Old Testament to indicate revelation: "*galah*" and "*rah*" mean to expose, to unveil and to manifest oneself. They are used in connection with the events of God's appearance in history and not merely to indicate His communications to human persons. This history-centered nature of God's revelation is reflected in the forms in

which God shows Himself: the storm, the pillar of cloud and of fire, the rustling of the trees and the whispering of the winds. These natural phenomena appear as commentary on God's revelation in the world, through historical events. This historical character of the Old Testament makes the Jewish religion become a historical religion unlike the religions of the neighboring peoples

b) God discloses His will in history and the disclosure of God's will in human history becomes the setting of human being's religious decisions. The human person is to respond, to accept God's purposeful guidance, to be thankful for this help and be ready to serve God's saving will manifested in history. To belong to the people of God, for the Jews, meant sharing, participation in. the revealing intervention of God in the history of the people.

c) God is known to the people as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is known through the powerful acts of salvation effected in the lives of people. He is powerful because He gives Israel victory over their enemies (1 Kings 20:13). He is just because He vindicates Himself through the events of the exile (Ez.29.28).

d) We may say that the whole religious setup of the Old Testament, as reflected in the Sacred Books, emerged not from a school of philosophy but from a nation struggling for its life with the help of God. Israel discovers the meaning of her relationship with God through reflection and divine illumination of the experience of the events of history. In Israel there is no distinction between profane history and sacred history. The whole history is & process by which Israel becomes a sign of the intervention of God in this world.

e) There are different stages in this process of revelation through history:

i) *The Call of Abraham*: It is the inauguration of the economy of divine intervention. It involves Abraham in a partnership with Yahweh, and Abraham's posterity is destined to share in the relationship that begins to exist between him and God (Gen.17: 1-4).

ii) *Exodus and Sinai*: This is the central event of the Old Testament. The whole destiny of Israel, ever after, is bound up with the events of Exodus and Sinai. They are the basis of all the religious life of the Israelites. The prophets will constantly recall this revealing event in order to remind the Israelites of their obligation towards Yahweh. The care of this revelation is the manifestation of the commandments, which will bring the people of all generations into. a covenant relationship with Yahweh. In all these, Israel saw the hand of God that was guiding their destiny. For them Yahweh was the God of history, not same God of nature; whose existence and action were characterized by necessity. In the fertility cults of the contemporary middle-eastern peoples, God of nature could be known in and through the seasonal cycle. The ritual myths of fertility saw God dying at the end of each harvest time to be resurrected in the following spring. For the Israelites, however, Yahweh was the Lord of history (Josh 24:2-5).

iii) *Judges, Samuel and Kings*: The Word of God directed the history of the people in the Promised Land. Israel never again divorced her religious thinking from the category of history. All through their history it is the word of God that makes history and renders it intelligible. Through the prophecy of Nathan, the dynasty of David becomes a direct ally of Yahweh (2 Sam.7:16, 23:5), in the realization of His salvific plan, which is the ultimate object of the act of God's self-revelation.

iv) *The Exile*: Yahweh is the Lord of all nations. It is the Word of Yahweh that dominates history and, far in advance, reveals its course (Is.45:19, 48:16). God holds the poles of

history (Is 41:4; 44:4; 48:12). History is intelligible because it unfolds according to a plan revealed by God. The faith of Israel is in this God of history. The invisible is visibly manifested in historical acts; he is revealed in the ordinary and universal course of human history.

B. REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS HISTORICAL:

The best expression of this historical self-revelation is found in Heb 1:1-2. It is not only a revelation in history but it is also a revelation that has a history. Revelation is a historical process and the future forms a continuum with the past. The link between the past and future is the present event. This event is the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus the New Testament presents revelation as God's revealing act in history that runs between the word of promise and the work of fulfillment and spans past and present and opens into the future as the definitive salutary participation of the human person in the life of God.

Revelation in the New Testament, therefore, is here and now in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who lived in our history. He is the message, which he proclaims (Mt.23:8-10; 5:18; Mk.10:16; Mk.1:15). He is presented by the Synoptics as the one in whom the historical interventions of God in the Old Testament are fulfilled (Mt.4:12ff; 12:6). Christ is at once the one who preaches the kingdom of God and the one in whom the Kingdom of God is realized (Lk.9:2; Mt 10:7-8). The historical character of Christ gives to the divine revelation in Christ a historical dimension. His death and resurrection are the last acts of this history. Christ's resurrection, which is both a historical event as well as an eschatological one, becomes the last event of revelation and consequently the perfection of the historical revelation.

C. WHAT IS HISTORICAL REVELATION?

a) History and Revelation

When we interpret the historical events from the perspective of God, these events become revelatory. When this happens we have the plan of salvation, that is, God's action guiding the course of history. Christian antiquity calls it 'economy' which is different from 'theology'. The latter is concerned with a system of truth in which revelation is expressed; the former, instead deals with God's manner of dealing with and relating to human beings in their concrete existential situation with a view to guide them to their destiny fully respecting their freedom. .

i) Revelation in History: God intervened in the history of humanity at opportune moments chosen by Him. This revelation in history has the following characteristics:

Personal character of revelation: God communicates with human beings as persons in their concrete existential situation. It is an act of election: God communicates by choosing people. More than information about Himself, what takes place here is the fact that God relates Himself to the person. It is guidance within history: God enters into the milieu of human life and activity in the process of revelation. He reveals Himself journeying with human beings in their struggles and tensions, success and failures. Universal through particular. It does not take place through a universal promulgation. God takes into account the particular cultural, linguistic, philosophical realities of the

various peoples and communicates Himself to each one of them accordingly. His universal love is revealed in historical particularities. God chooses Abraham to make him father of all who would believe (Gen 12:3; 22:18); Israel is meant to assemble all nations in the worship of the One God (Is 66); Jesus Christ is meant to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad (Jn 11:51). The universalism of salvation, however, should not diminish the peculiar election of each one; the communion of believers is not based on the ties of a common nature, but on solidarity, which is rooted in God's comprehensive love. Freedom: God does not exercise any form of coercion; the human person must give his or her answer freely. God reveals along with His love, His patience, as He leads human person on, in spite of many failings. For the human person, this freedom implies the renunciation of his or her own calculation and of refusal to take shelter in established orders. Faithfulness: The person who has been chosen and to whom revelation has been communicated has only one security: God's fidelity. Salvation: Since God has entered into the company of the human persons and is journeying with them the ultimate goal will be reaching the destiny.

ii) Revelation through history: The very historical events themselves are made use of by God as means of revelation. The event itself is salvation history. Biblical history is at the same time revelation history, and vice versa. In every historical event, there are two realities: event and word

Event: They can be natural events, supernatural events, and political, social or moral events. God can make use of all the occasions to make known His will. From the beginning of her history, Israel lived through a certain number of events: deliverance from bondage, wandering through the desert, entry into Canaan etc. All these events are revelatory.

Words: Words express the meaning of the divine actions. This is done in Israel through the ministry of the prophets. When the historical events are interpreted they become altogether the history of salvation.

iii) The Implications of a Revelation in and Through History:

- Christian revelation is not a system of abstract propositions concerning God. It is not a philosophical system.
- It is mediated through signs. It is not the direct communication of an idea. It is the meeting of two persons in the context of a sign, which in this case is the history.
- Being historical, revelation is not completely comprehended in the beginning, but at the end of the revealing history. This revealing history is the Christ-event. Thus the resurrection of Christ is the end of the revealing history. The Resurrection and the Parousia are not two separate events of salvation history. They constitute together as one event.
- Since historical revelation is completely comprehended only at the end of time, all the events that come before the end are illuminated by the last event.
- Being historical, this revelation is accessible to all, provided that human beings are open to the realities that occur. It is not given to us through secret and mysterious mediation.
- Revelation is particularized with a view to universalization.

b) Historical Revelation and Natural Revelation:

The natural - supernatural divide is seen by Thomism as being two-layered: natural concerns what pertains to the human being as such; whereas the supernatural is a free gift infused by God. This, however, creates a problem. By stressing the clear and radical distinction between the natural and supernatural, there was a tendency to lead to an opinion in which these two orders (natural and supernatural), appear as isolated and self-enclosed spheres of reality. In such a context, on the one hand, human nature was reduced to a pure nature without anything supernatural in it; whereas, on the other hand, the supernatural order of revelation and grace was conceived of as imposed on human nature by a decree of God from outside nature and outside human experience. Such a revelation tends to appear as a disturbance of our natural life; it will be blindly obeyed but remains basically unintelligible, because it responds *to* no need or desire grounded in natural experience and life in this world.

To overcome this difficulty, in the course of history, a trend of thought called the *Nouvelle Theologie* tried to introduce the idea of the natural ordination of human nature towards a desire for God. However, this movement was criticized, especially in the encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis* for having compromised the quality of grace as a free gift and thereby undermining the supernatural realm.

The dilemma seemed to be the following: If the supernatural were a free gift, it would be extrinsic and alien to human nature (the Thomistic position); on the other hand, if the supernatural were not extrinsic, its character of being a free gift would be seriously compromised (the stance of the *Nouvelle Theologie*).

Karl Rahner poses his solution to the problem with what he calls the "Supernatural Existential". He does this, not by analyzing human nature, but by arguing from the universal salvific will of God, God has called all human beings to salvation; and this ordination of all people cannot be merely external to human nature. What Rahner calls the Supernatural Existential refers to the *actual situation of the human world and history*. All human beings have been raised up to the supernatural level right from the beginning, by the gracious and gratuitous and supernatural call of God; this is not their right or due as it is not a constituent part of human nature. In effect it means that in the concrete (existentially), human beings are all actually ordained to a single supernatural goal viz., to be partakers of the divine nature. This Supernatural Existential is not merely the dynamism of human nature; but a grace freely given to all. Christian revelation is a divine response to the human longing which has its source in this concrete (existential) human situation as stated by Vatican II "The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God" (GS n.19; See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 27,28,29)

c) Historical Revelation in the Indian Religious context

The Indian attitude to changing reality is that it cannot communicate anything that is divine or transcendental. History which is concerned with the changing phenomenon of the world has no value as far as the divine revelatory process is concerned. Historical facts, in the Indian understanding, are only transitory examples –

often deceptive and always partial- of a reality that is always *transhistorical* (R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* p. 90). In order to arrive at the Divine it is necessary to go beyond the transitory. Hence revelation through history is not possible. Revelation in history is also not possible because what falls under sense perception is merely attributes and not the thing-in-itself. The absolute Brahman is beyond the grasp of senses. This is beautifully expressed in *Kenopanishad*: "Eyes cannot perceive it, speech cannot express it, and the mind cannot conceive it. So we do not know how it can be taught" (*Kenopanishad* 1, 3). Therefore, according to Hinduism, historical revelation is not possible.

2. THE EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

As a consequence of the historical intervention of God in the life of the people, God met them in their concrete, bodily, social existence. That means God communicated with human beings in the realm of personal experience and not in the realm of intellectual knowledge. We find this through out the Holy Scripture. God knows Israel and Israel knew Him in the intimate relationship of the covenant and not through rationalistic investigations. For the human beings it consisted in this: They take part in and, to some degree consciously grasp the meaning of, the historical events as relating them to God. For them it was an experience of God. It was an experience that affected them in their totality of being; their whole persons were involved in the act of receiving this revelation. Revelation was for them, therefore, the complex of experience, feeling and desire that a Personal encounter elicits. This is what we mean by saying that for the Jews revelation is an experience of God. We can divide this Jewish experience of God into three categories. All these have their basis and foundation in the historical revelation.

A. REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS EXPERIENTIAL

a) Experience of God in the Cosmic Events

It is through her history primarily that Israel came to know Yahweh, when in Egypt she experienced His power to deliver her. Constant meditation on this manifestation of the power of Yahweh using the elements of nature for the salvation of His people brought them to the realization of the mastery of Yahweh over nature and this ultimately made them believe in God as the creator of the universe. Israel understood that the same God who had raised her from the nothingness of slavery had also raised the cosmos from nothingness. Since creation is something said by God it is also revelation. Created things are an echo of Him who called them into being; they manifest His presence, His majesty, His wisdom (Ps 19: 2-3; Job 25:7-14; Prov 8:22-31).

b) Experience of God in the Revelation through Historical Events

It began with Abraham, Moses and the prophets. It started with her founding through Abraham. The Exodus and the occupation of Canaan were recalled as being revelatory events. The events of their history thus became for them events of divine experience (cfr. Gen 12 and Ex 2 & 3). These experiences had various expressions in the Old Testament: *Visions etc.*

c) Experience of God in the Word

The acts of Yahweh are forms of revelation, just as the acts of any person, manifests the reality of the person; but the meaning of the acts of Yahweh can be understood only through the interpretation of Yahweh Himself. For this interpretation, Yahweh used human beings. They were the leaders of Israel to whom the Word of God was entrusted. This Word of God has a triple manifestation. Its forms are: *i) Law or Torah ii) Prophecy iii) Wisdom*

B. REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN CHRIST

a) The Revelation as Experience in the Person of Christ

i) Christ, the Self-Revelation of God

God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ through His teaching. In the Old Testament the Law and Word came directly from God. In fact we read in almost every page of the Old Testament, that God spoke to the leaders of the people. In the New Testament in the case of the teachings of Christ, it is He himself that speaks (Mt.5).

God revealed Himself through the actions, appearance and gestures of Christ. Here we consider in a special way his miracles taken in themselves. We find that they are the signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God. They reveal the merciful love of God through His power (Mt.12:28).

The revelation in Christ is at the same time the revelation of the Holy Trinity; that is, the manifestation of the internal life of God Himself. Christ explicitly says that the Father appears to men in the Son. Whoever sees him sees the Father (John.14:9).

ii) Christ the Recipient of Revelation: The man Jesus was the recipient of God's revelation and he fulfilled the vocation of the person of faith. In Christ, therefore, we have the revelation also of human person, as an essential partner in the encounter. Jesus did not present himself only as God speaking truths to be written down and learned by men. He presented Himself as the one who lived in prayerful communion with the Father and one who invited human beings to join with him in this communion of knowledge and love.

iii) The Glorified Christ, the Perfect Sharer of the Experience: The Glorified Christ is the fullness of revelation. We find that the double theme of Son revealing the Father (self-revelation of God), and the Father glorifying the Son (Christ, as the recipient of revelation) finds its perfect fusion at the "hour" to which his life is pointed. It was at that hour that God's love for the human person encountered the total responsiveness of human love in the person of Christ. At that time the revelation-redemption was accomplished. In that one act of the death and resurrection of Christ, the whole revelation history was recapitulated in Him. There was on the one hand the supreme revelation of God's self-gift to the world and on the other hand there was the supreme act of participating receptivity on the part of human person. Revelation as an experience of the human person reaches its fullness, therefore, only at the hour when Christ burst through the gates of death by handing over the Spirit.

- b) The Apostles share in the consciousness of Christ and thus in his experience.

One of the conditions required for continuing the mission of Christ in this world as the revealer of the message of salvation is to have had the experience of the Risen Lord. The Apostle is, therefore, a sharer in the experience of the Lord. This becomes evident from the following considerations:

- i) *The privileged position of the Apostles:* The Apostolic experience of Christ is the root, which forever grounds the life of the Church. Through them the global inclusion of all in the experience of the Risen Lord becomes particular and personal for all human persons. Their ministry was not therefore a mere verbal utterance. They had to reveal a person in whom there was the perfect realization of the encounter between God and human person. Therefore they could testify with their personal lives.
- ii) *The Objectification of the Apostolic Experience of Revelation:* We have spoken so far about the pre-conceptual basis of revelation, by calling it an experience. But this does not mean that in the New Testament there is no mention of the necessity of the conceptual, judgmental and verbal expression of revelation. If it is a personal experience, it must have also these characteristics. We cannot consider an experience truly human if it is incapable of objective expression. This is done by preaching. It is true that the concepts that we have do not express everything that we experience. The apostles knew more than they could express. One who experiences something deeply finds his or her words insufficient to express what he or she means. Seen in this perspective we see that in Christian revelation, there is always the possibility of evolution. But this evolution must be understood as the expression of the genuine experience.

- c) The Church, as the Sharer of the Experience of the Apostles

As Christ sent the Apostles and made them sharers of his experience of the Father, so the apostles through their teaching made this experience a permanent reality in the Church. The fact of the risen Christ is a reality that is actual today. Christ's resurrection, therefore, as a fact of revelation, is present to all human persons of all times.

C) REVELATION THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The Holy Scripture is very clear on the fact that revelation or the Gospel proclamation is a factual and experienced event (Jn 1:1-3). Hence as we investigate the nature of revelation, it is necessary to discover the manner in which experience becomes a channel of revelation in Christian economy.

- a) What is Experience?

It is ordinarily taken to be a source or special form of our knowledge, deriving from the immediate reception of the given or of the impression in contrast to discursive thought, mere concepts, authoritatively accepted opinions, or historical tradition. Experience is also used to designate the knowledge and sense of reality gained from contact in contrast to a "book of knowledge" which remains external.

i) *Transcendental Experience* is that which the human persons have by the fact that they have their being prior to all concrete modes of existence, out of experience, out of limited spiritual horizon. It is the awareness of a limitless openness to the world, history and finally to God as the one *who* is beyond all these empirical realities. It is the experience of totality. However, it is important to note here that such an experience is always the result of a mediated empirical experience.

ii) *Historical Experience* is that in which the human persons enter into events in their mutual connection and interaction. This experience being human is always relational. In Christian revelation in which God enters into human history and guides its course by being a co-traveler with human beings, it also acquires a religious dimension. No historical event remains without an effect on the present or future. It is like a stone that is thrown into the water, causing ripples. So every historical event is *still happening*. Even today it is an event.

iii) *Religious Experience* is one in which there is a living contact with God. In this sense all religions admit a certain form of religious experience, because personal movement towards God is essential to all religions. But there is no such thing as pure religious experience. It always implies moral, metaphysical and mystical elements, or is embedded in a historical process and institutions.

b) Experiential Revelation

Christian revelation being historical is an experience of God in history. We saw how the Bible presents the event of revelation as something, which has bearing upon experience. God reveals Himself through human experience. Hence we might also say that it reveals the true nature of the human being. Christian revelation is not only divine revelation, but also human revelation. It is the revelation of God through concrete human experiences of man's struggles and toils and efforts. The eternal God is revealed in the concrete human experience.

c) Experiential Revelation in the context of India.

In India the reality is conceived as one: the human, cosmic and divine are in reality one. The revelatory process consists in awakening our consciousness to this one reality, which is the self, the *Atman*. He through whom we see, taste, adore, touch, listen, enjoy, and knows all things: he is the self of everything (*Katha Upanishad* III, 13 - 15). Revelation is the process by which we become conscious, of this supreme reality through whom and in whom we know all other realities. The Vedic revelation is not primarily a thematic communication of esoteric facts, although certain passages of the Upanishads, disclose some truth that is unknown to the normal range of human experience. For the most part the Vedic revelation consists in an illumination, a becoming conscious of the reality which encompasses everything. It unfolds the relationship that exists within this reality. The means to realize this awareness or consciousness is through experience. It is expressed in Vedic period as hearing the Word OM, a resounding sound, the Divine Word which enlightens and communicates the content of the reality (R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience* pg. 1 ff).

The contemplative, meditative experience is at the source of this revelation. Later on, another factor enters into this revelatory process, *Bhakti* or Devotion. The best way to know God is through *Bhakti*. Sankara and Ramanuja relate *bhakti* to knowledge. On the one hand *bhakti* is the first step to *Jnana*. On the other *bhakti* matures through continuous meditation on the glory and grandeur of God. Then the soul attains the vision of God which leads to transformation of life. This means that in the acquisition of the knowledge of God, emotions play an important role. "By devotion he knows me, what my measure is and what I am essentially; then, having known me essentially, he enters forthwith into me" (Gita 18, 25). Hence in the revelatory process, experience plays a very crucial role. It is important to note here that experience excludes any intermediary, any third party that would render the experience impossible, by turning it into an experiment through its instrumentation (R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* pg. 298). The Hindu experience of God, therefore, is not historically mediated as in the case of the biblical experience of God.

3. CHRISTIAN REVELATION: ITS INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNITARIAN CHARACTER

The historical and experiential character of revelation necessarily makes it become an event of personal relationship. In any genuine human experience human beings establish contact with other persons and this will result in bringing out the latent in each other. The partners are revealed and they enter into a new way of existence. The documents of Vatican II on Divine Revelation very clearly show this by speaking of revelation as an act that constitutes an encounter between the human person and God: "Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God, out of the abundance of His love, speaks to men as friends and lives among them" (DV 2).

A. THE INTERPERSONAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

a) Revelation in the Old Testament is Interpersonal

The God of the Old Testament is not a power, but a person. Therefore revelation, as the Bible understands it, is personalistic in character. It is the self-revelation of one person to another person. In this it differs from the knowledge of the divinity or revelation of truths about God. It is not an experience of the divine in rituals or symbolism (e.g., in the mystery cult). It is not the result of divination, it is a person-to-person meeting. We shall examine some salient features of this personal encounter between God and the human person.

1) Yahweh enters into a personal relationship with the human person (Gen.12:1-3):

i) "I" - "Thou" relationship is established between God and Abraham. There is a confrontation; a purpose and an intention are communicated by one party to the other.

ii) God has a plan. He requires the human being's personal co-operation to effect it. This plan consists in making the human persons enter into communion with God in view of their salvation

iii) This personal character will be the mark of identity of the God that the Israelites worship: He is the God of Abraham, i.e.; He is the God that has entered into

personal communion with human beings through an act of His self-revelation. The development of this encounter and the further acquaintance with Abraham's God make up the rest of the Old Testament.

ii) Yahweh makes a covenant with humanity (Ex.19:6): The core of this covenant is a communion of thought and will with Yahweh. God has revealed Himself to the Israelites. Such knowledge implies, in return on Israel's part, a total attachment to Yahweh through the bonds of faith, obedience and love.

b) Revelation in the New Testament is an interpersonal union of the human person with God in Christ. The personal character of revelation attains its climax in the Incarnation.

B. THE COMMUNITY NATURE OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

a) In the Old Testament

The quintessence of divine revelation in the Old Testament is expressed in several places thus: "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12). The historical events of the OT acquire meaning only when they are seen in the perspective of the plan of God to build up a community; the choice of Abraham, the events of Exodus etc. We might say: Israel herself as a people is the sign of divine revelation (Is 11:12).

b) In the New Testament

In the Synoptic Gospels, the essential content of revelation is the salvation offered to humanity under the figure of the Kingdom of God. For Paul, Christ the revelation of the Father is the word of reconciliation between God and man (2 Cor 5:18-19). The objectification of revelation is the establishment of the Church. The Church is the mystery of Christ made visible (Eph 2:11-22). For John, the revelation of God through Christ becomes manifest on the cross, when he gathers together all peoples and opens his side as a sign of this gathering. In fact the Fathers of the Church will see in the piercing of the side of Christ, the birth of the new community.

Revelatory experience is continued today in the community of the Church. The Church manifests the revelation in many ways. She plays her role as the bearer of the original revelation. She makes the revelation to happen today through the Church. She also celebrates her experience of the Risen Lord in the Liturgy. Every Eucharistic celebration is the revelation of the loving kindness of God manifested in Christ. She expresses her experience of the Lord through acts of Christian love.

CHAPTER IV THE LANGUAGE OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

1. WORD AS THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF DIVINE REVELATION

God's action in the establishment of interpersonal relationship is manifested by means of symbols. The word is one of the symbols that He has used in this process. In

revelation God always speaks. Hence our study of revelation calls for a serious examination of the meaning and role of the Word of God. The apostles claimed to be the spokespersons of Christ. Their words were put forth not as human words on a divine truth, but as words, which could bring the believer face to face with Christ, (Gal.3: 1) and convey to the believer a share in the wisdom proper to the Son of God (Phi1.2: 5). The word that issued from this life in Christ and the word that mediated this knowledge of Christ was thus also spoken of as the "Word of God". Therefore we may note the following process in the articulation of the Word of God in the history of salvation.

The Word comes into the world and manifests itself in creation, in history and in the words of Christ (which includes by recapitulation, the whole of the revealed Word). The prophets and the apostles proclaim these words by preaching and by celebrating the liturgy. They also wrote down these words. In this way the Word that is God came to all people. The preached and written words mediated belief in the risen Lord.

a) What is the word in the Holy Scripture?

The Hebrew '*dabar*' unlike the Greek '*logos*' and our '*word*', means not only intelligible utterance, but over and above this, 'the effective power of the word'. It is dynamic. By His Word God called the world into existence. The Word of Yahweh is the distinctive determining power in Israel's history. 'Word' is often enough used to mean simply the occurrence itself. In many biblical passages this fullness of meaning is primarily the key to correct interpretation, as for example in Heb 1:3; Ps 33:11; Is 5:19; 28:29; 46:10; Jer.23:20.

b) Word, as the medium of revelation in the Holy Scripture

Although we spoke of word both as '*word*' and as '*event*', in the strict sense of the term '*word*' is distinct from '*event*'. Although revelation consisted primarily of God's saving activity, and thus of the history of the Jewish people, this history only acquired the full and pregnant significance of revelation when it was understood by the people of God through the interpretation by the prophets. The communication on the part of God through the historical events was interpreted by a human word on the part of the prophet. (Amos 3: 7; Is 42: 9; 1Pet 1: 20).

Throughout the history of the Old Testament we see that the word has the place of preference in the communication of God to human beings, e.g., the call of Abraham, the theophanies of the burning bush and at Sinai. God appears not so much to be seen as to speak. God reveals His name; He reveals his will to His people in the ten words (Ex 34:8). The religion of the Old Testament, and even more Judaism, is a religion of the Word of God to be heard, and obeyed (Dt 6: 4ff). Jesus appears as the teacher before men and women, gathering about him a circle of disciples. Christ presented as Messiah through his preaching: This is my beloved Son. Hear him (Mk 9: 7). The disciples, who continue the work of Christ by the service of the word (Lk 1:2; Acts 6:4). Not infrequently the revelation of salvation, as it is mediated by the Church, is simply

expressed in the formula: Logos - the Word, the Word of God, and the Word of the Lord (1 Thess1:6; 1 Cor 14:36; 2 Tim 4:2).

c) Word as Mystery

In every personal relationship there is an element of mystery. It is along this personalistic line that we are going to examine the mysteries that are found in Christian revelation. Seen from this perspective, mysteries become a sign of revelation, rather than an obstacle to understand the content of the revelatory event. Of course, this does not mean that our human intelligence is capable of understanding all the truths that regard God whom we meet in this personal encounter.

a) The term 'Mystery' in the Non-Biblical World

i) *'Mysterion' in ancient Greece.*

It is a secret cult by which a closer and a more personal union are established between the worshipper and the God whom he or she worships. Odo Casel defines it thus: "The mystery is a sacred ritual action in which a saving deed is made present through the rite; the congregation, by performing the rite, takes part in the saving act, and thereby wins salvation" (O. CASEL, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, pg.54). We find here mystery almost a synonym of ritual symbols. Being a ritual action, it is outside the real event of interpersonal relationship although it is a means for arriving at such a relationship. Hence in ancient Greece mystery has a ritualistic connotation.

ii) *Mystery in Hinduism.*

From the *Upanishadic* time, sacred doctrine was considered also secret doctrine, not to be imparted to those who are not qualified. Concerning the doctrine of Brahman and the path of attaining it, we read in *Maitri Upanishad* (6:29).

"This profoundest mystery one should not mention to anyone who is not a son, or who is not a pupil, or who is not tranquil; however, to one who is devoted to none other than his teacher or to one who is supplied with all qualities, one may give it". (Cf. Brhad 6: 3, 12; Mund 3: 2,11; Svet 6:22).

The sacred instruction about the nature of Atman is given only after many years, e.g., in the instruction imparted by *Prajapati* (Chand, Up 8,7ss.) because "he obtains all worlds, and all desires who has found out and who understands the Atman" (8, 12, 16). Touching is the story of *Upakosala* who dwells 12 years in the house of his teacher without receiving instruction and falls sick, until the sacred fires themselves begin to speak to him and explain the nature of *Brahma* (Chand 4, 10ss). Also *Gita* speaks of the most hidden knowledge (*guhavati-aman*) which is pronounced by Krishna: It consists in the relation between God and the world: "All this world is pervaded by me in my unmanifested form; all beings exist in me, but I do not dwell in them" (9, 1,4). It is the doctrine of divine immanence and transcendence.

Hence it appears that in Indian tradition the intimate doctrines on the ultimate reality of *Brahma* and *Atman*, of life and its final destiny, of *Karma*, of the word and

God's presence in all beings were considered as esoteric teachings which were restricted to the circle of family and pupils, and could be imparted only to those who were disposed to receive them. Still these doctrines are not mysteries in the sense that they essentially transcend human understanding. Those who are properly initiated can understand them. Thus in Hinduism, mystery has a religious connotation.

b) The term 'Mystery' in the Holy Scriptures

We may state that for Paul 'Mystery' is 'the divine plan of salvation, hidden from all eternity and now revealed, through which God establishes Christ as the centre of His new economy of salvation, constituting him through his death and resurrection, the one sole principle of salvation, both for the Gentiles and for the Jews, the Head of all persons, angels and human beings. Concretely the mystery is Christ'. (Latourelle). We can distinguish different stages in the unfolding of this plan:

i) 'Mystery' as the plan of God for our salvation

It is the eternal plan hidden in God and revealed in time through Christ and His apostles. "...the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his saints" (Col:25-26; cfr. also Eph 1:9-10; Eph 3:6). The Mystery here is not to be considered as something that is merely unknown. . It is the reality of the sphere into which human being cannot enter. God enables us to enter into it through His revealing action. He does not merely make human persons know the truths that He has hidden, but He makes them capable of receiving the Mystery by exalting their whole being and transforming it. He truly initiates them into the Kingdom of God liberating them from the kingdom of sin.

ii) 'Mystery' is the realization of the plan in Christ

This initiation or revelation of the Mystery to human persons takes place in and through Christ. The Son of God Incarnate becomes the Mystery and that is how Paul describes Christ: "It was God's purpose to reveal it to them and to show all the riches and glory of this mystery to the pagans. The Mystery is Christ is among you your hope of glory" (Col 1:26-29; 1 Tim 3:16)). The content of this Mystery is presented as the Paschal Christ. This is evident from the text of the letter to Timothy which we have quoted above, as well as from the following passage from the first letter to the Corinthians: "As for me brothers, when I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God guaranteed (the 'mystery of God' as some manuscripts have it). During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus and only about Him as the crucified Christ" (1 Cor.2: 1). The Mystery of God that was hidden, therefore, is Christ. He is the Logos, the eternal plan of God, made visible in order to bring human beings into the Kingdom of God. The Mystery is the Christ event.

iii) Mystery is salvation in Christ, made available through the ministry of the Apostles.

The apostles are the ministers of the plan of salvation manifested in Christ. The apostles were sent to proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ. Through their ministry, they made Christ, the Mystery, present among the nations: "The Mystery is Christ among you, your hope of glory: this is the Christ we proclaim" (Col 1: 27).

"People must think of us as Christ's servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1). The apostles, through their ministry of the mysteries of God bring all the nations into the same heritage as Israel, making them belong to the people of God. They do this by proclaiming the death and resurrection of Christ in word and rite.

c) Mystery, a sign of the interpersonal character of revelation

In the person of Jesus the totality of God's actions and intentions on behalf of humanity constitute the pattern of an incomprehensible whole outside of which the human being cannot go. Every religious truth, every truth that concerns their relationship with God and their final destiny, can be understood only in the light of Christ. This is the saving knowledge. They attain to it only by relating themselves personally to Jesus Christ through love. "I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father" (Jn 15: 15). It is the awareness of the presence of the human person to God in Christ; this transcends by far the knowledge through concepts and it is precisely here that we have the Mystery. If this knowledge of the mystery is absent our religious knowledge will be conceptual and would lack the personal element.

Another characteristic of mystery according to Paul is that of the community of persons that continues to exist today in the Christ of today, namely the Church. We know that the basis on which the Church rests is love. The mystery, which is revealed in Christ continues to manifest itself in the realization of the love among human beings, in spite of their differences of race, caste and creed. All understand one another and find their common belonging and the common destiny, their salvation as members of the same family by entering into this Mystery.

d) Mystery, a sign of the experiential character of revelation

The meeting between the human person and God, which transcends the category of concepts, is realized, we said above, in personal depth. Here we have an experiential awareness of the other. In the experience of an encounter there exists a dynamism which enables the persons to meet the other not from outside, but from within. This experiential knowledge grows not through a process of reasoning and discovery of concepts, but through a process of growth in relationship. It is this that is realized in the history of salvation, which has its climax in Jesus Christ. Since this experience is to some extent ineffable we cannot always formulate them in propositions. Therefore we call it a Mystery.

2. MIRACLE AS THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF DIVINE REVELATION

A. What is a miracle?

A miracle is an extraordinary and, therefore, astounding event which is inexplicable in terms of familiar causes and, therefore, perceived as involving a breach of the usual natural order resulting from a direct *or* indirect divine intervention. Since miracles in the proper sense have a necessary religious context they can be recognized as

such only by a person who believes in or at least is disposed to believe in God and admits the possibility of the divine power being operative in this world. The impact of miracles as revelatory events varies from person to person and is dependent on their context and how they are actually experienced and the disposition of the person who experiences them. Miracles may lead a person to believe in God or the mediator of revelation and to accept the revelation as authentic and, thus, can have confirmatory function; as symbolic events they can be media of divine revelation and part of the revelatory process. Miracles directly experienced by a person have greater effects than reports of miracles, the effectiveness of which depends on the credibility of the reports.

B. Biblical Miracles

The Bible contains reports of extraordinary divine interventions as part of the Biblical narrative. For the Bible nature is not a closed system of law, but is dependent on and controlled by God, and as such it is the stage for the works of God. Miracles according to the Bible are occurrences sufficiently startling, unusual and unexpected to call attention to themselves which faith recognizes as special acts of God. The miracle narratives of the Bible are the result of occurrences experienced and interpreted as divine interventions; accounts of which were handed down incorporating further insights into their significance. They are not so much "historical" accounts of what happened as part of the *kerygma* of God's saving intervention in human history meant to instill and foster faith.

C. The Official Teachings of the Church

a) I Vatican Council

In ch. 3 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* the council has stated, "...in order that our submission of faith be nevertheless in harmony with reason God willed that exterior proofs of his revelation, viz. divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies, should be joined to the interior helps of the Holy Spirit; as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, they are the most certain signs of divine revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all people" (CF 119). And in canons 3 and 4 of the chapter the Council has condemned the views "that the divine revelation cannot be made credible by outward signs, and that, therefore, people ought to be moved to faith solely by each one's inner experience or by personal inspiration" and "that no miracles are possible, and that therefore all accounts of them, even those contained in Holy Scripture, are to be dismissed as fables and myths; or that miracles can never be recognized with certainty, and that the divine origin of the Christian religion cannot be legitimately proved by them" (CF 127, 128).

b) Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* of Pius XII

The Pope is realistic in his assessment of the criteria of divine revelation when he acknowledges, "Difficulties may occur to the human mind ...in forming a firm judgment concerning the credibility of the Catholic faith, though we are provided with such a

wealth of wonderful exterior signs by which the divine origin of the Christian religion can be proved with certainty even by the natural light of reason alone. But a person may be guided by prejudices, may be influenced by passions and ill intentions, and so can turn away from and resist not only the evidence of the exterior signs which is plain to the eyes, but also the heavenly inspirations which God conveys to our minds" (CF 146).

c) . II Vatican Council

In the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* instead of seeing the miracles as exterior proofs of revelation the Council speaks of them as constituent part of the revelation (n.2). At the same time they have also a confirmative function: "[Jesus Christ] completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine guarantees. He did this by the signs and miracles, but above all by his death and glorious resurrection from the dead, and finally by sending the Spirit of truth" (n.4). *Lumen Gentium* acknowledges that "the miracles of Jesus also demonstrate that the kingdom [of God] has already come on earth" (n. 5). And the Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae* n. 11) affirms that Christ "supported and confirmed his preaching by miracles to arouse the faith of his hearers and give them assurance, but not to coerce them."

Conclusion

Miracles reveal the saving presence of God in the world. We can call the *Exodus* and the *Resurrection* as the basic events of this revealing presence and therefore they are the foundation miracles of the people of God, of the Old and the New Covenant. Each of these supreme biblical miracles is preceded by other, lesser miracles, which call attention to the true significance of the supreme miracles and prepare for them. Before the Exodus come the plagues of Egypt and before the death and resurrection of Christ the healings, exorcisms (the casting out of the demons) and the so-called nature miracles, the plagues of Egypt were preliminary judgments on Pharaoh, warning him of worse to come if he remained obdurate. The miracles of Jesus are preliminary rounds in the final conflict with the powers of evil, or the preliminary manifestations of the final revelation of the glory of the final revelation of the glory of God fully revealed on the cross.

CHAPTER V

CHRIST EVENT, THE CLIMAX OF CHRISTIAN REVELATION

1. THE CHRIST EVENT

The simple title of "Word" (*Logos*) which John applies to Jesus is perhaps the most sublime affirmation in the NT, that Jesus is the self-manifestation of God (Jn 1:14; also Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-3). John came to the realization that which he heard, saw and touched was "that which was from the beginning... the word of life" (1 Jn 1:1). Hence Jesus is also called 'Emmanuel', which means, God with us (Mt 1:23). We read of Moses, that the Lord used to speak to him "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend"

(Ex 33:11). Through Jesus, this experience was repeated for people in an unsurpassed manner. The NT is aware that "in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb 1:2). The voice which spoke the word of Yahweh in the OT confirms Jesus as His Son at his baptism and at his transfiguration (Mk 1:11; 9:7). No wonder that Jesus' teaching supersedes that of even Moses, through whom Yahweh gave the Law to His People. This is seen in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:22, 28; 7:28-29) and in other texts (Mt 12:6-8; 19:9; Lk 11:31). He never uses the usual prophetic formulae, 'Thus says the Lord', but speaks with his own authority. Likewise Jesus exorcizes and works miraculous healings in his own name and not in the name of Yahweh, as would have been expected. It is clear that he does not fit into any of the categories of religious figures of his day.

In the life of Jesus, historic event and word of God are identical. Hence in going to see the new born babe, the shepherds say to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing ('*rhema*' in Greek) that has happened (Lk 2:15). '*Rhema*' means word, but stands in Semitic thought for the Hebrew '*dabhar*' which also means 'thing' or 'event'. To see Jesus is to see the Father (Jn 14:9). Mt 11:25-27 is a most formal text concerning revelation (see: NJBC 42:75). The Father (*Abba*) address occurs five times in these three verses. Through this unusual address Jesus revealed himself as living in an altogether unique relationship with God. "All things have been delivered to me by my Father": This verse, with the parallel verses of Mt 28:18 and Jn 3:35; 10:15; 13:3, tell us that no one can reveal the face of God to us better than Jesus does, for he is himself the personal tradition of God. "No one knows..." this verse reiterates Jesus' unique relationship of intimacy with the Father, in virtue of which he is able to reveal to us hidden depths of God. Thus he revealed to us the Trinitarian nature of God, which could never be otherwise known. Of course he did this, not in formal doctrinal formulations but in speaking about his mission for our salvation, which would require that "the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father... who proceeds from the Father" (Jn 15:26).

By "Christ event" we understand the whole life of Jesus including his Passover through death to glory "at the right hand of God" (Mk 16:19; Acts 7:55). God speaks to us not only through the words of Jesus but also through his whole life and deeds. Hence the decisive events in his life, which culminates in the paschal mystery, contain the central data of revelation. This revelation discloses the ultimate truth about human life: "Moreover, he confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed: that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal" (DV 4).

The apostles and early Church were keenly aware of this. Hence in their preaching they constantly proclaim, as the center of their message, that this Jesus "they put to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day" (Acts 10:39-40). This they preach to both Jews (Acts 2:23-24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 17:3) and Gentiles, even at the risk of being mocked (Acts 17:31-32) as mad men (Acts 26:23), for the message is "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23). In Paul's creed, it is "of first importance" that Christ died for our sins.... that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3-4). It is one of the

'*kairoi*' or particular moments chosen by the Father as turning points in salvation history (Jn 7:6; Mt 26:18). This also forms the center of the Trinitarian framework of the Apostles' Creed which is professed by all the Christian churches. It is this, more than the moral teaching of Jesus, which forms the Church's original, unique and irreplaceable message to the world, a message which is of crucial importance for humanity. It is no wonder, then, that Easter was the first and only feast in the earliest centuries of the Christian era, and every Sunday was celebrated as a mini-Easter. In fact Easter is the central feast around which all the other feasts of the liturgical year rotate. Vatican II stressed: "The Lord's day is the original feast day which is the foundation and nucleus of the whole liturgical year" (SC 106).

In conclusion we may say, that in Jesus the movement from cosmic to historical revelation took a decisive step, for in him the Word through whom all things were made (cosmic revelation) became man (historical revelation). God himself entered immediately as the one who acts in human history. The world is shown to have a personal center from which it has its meaning and destiny: history is not enclosed within meaningless cycles of *yugas* and *kalpas*. So the Church "holds that in her most benign Lord and Master can be found the key, the focal point, and the goal of all human history" (GS 10; 45).

2. NO NEW PUBLIC REVELATION

The Christ event made such an impression on the apostles so as to bring them to the realization that they were encountering the ultimate in revelation. Hence these are the "last days" (Heb 1:2), in which "we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (DV 4). A public revelation is one in which the custody of the matter revealed is entrusted to the Church. This revelation is handed down in the Church through sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, under the supervision of the teaching office (DV 10). During the debate on the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" at Vatican II, a proposed amendment to the effect that Revelation was "closed" with the death of the Apostles was rejected by the Doctrinal Commission. For in fact, Christ "speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church" (SC 7; DV 21), and the Holy Spirit leads the Church into all truth (Jn 14:26; 16:12-15; DV 8).

However, as DULLES explains, this is "not new revelation in the sense of providing anything that could serve as an additional or independent norm of faith, over and above Christ and the gospel. The future will fulfill what has already been given, rather than abolish it. In Christ, we already possess, in symbol and mystery, a share in the final kingdom" (237-8). Thus St Paul contrasts our present and eschatological condition: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully" (1 Cor 13:12; also 1 Jn 3:2). What happened in and through Jesus cannot "be superseded by any future events, because in him precisely the end of all things has occurred" or been anticipated (PANNENBERG 60). In him "that which is ultimately valid and meaningful has already pre-occurred" (ibid. 89). Hence he is the goal of all history and we now look forward to the revelation of God which will end history (GS 45). Even though the action of God outside the Church is not a mere repetition of what

God has been doing in the Church, nevertheless what has been revealed in Jesus Christ cannot be equaled, surpassed or, much less, cancelled out by any past or future revelation.

Against this background we will understand, that private revelations are not new assertions adding so to say to the body of revelation, but rather new commands, showing how Christians should act in a concrete historical situation. Divine prophecies, warn us against worldly optimism; they recall us to penance, conversion, prayer, and trust in the victory of Christ, hope in God eternal. Genuine private revelations will lead us to a deeper understanding and application of the public revelation which is entrusted to the Church.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN REVELATION, AN ON-GOING PROCESS

The Church is an active and intelligent custodian of divine revelation. She "keeps all these things, pondering them in her heart" even if there are some things which she "did not understand" (Lk 2:19,50-51). So she may rightly be called 'the Mary of history'. In this sense the Church always believes more than what she teaches because "there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers ... through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth" (DV 8). Thus it is that "the Church, in her teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes" (ibid.). St Vincent of Lerins likens this process to the development of a seed into a tree or of an embryo into an adult person: a "growth within the limits of its own nature", just as "nothing new is produced in old men that were not already present in an undeveloped form when they were boys".

The fact of God's communication to humanity, also outside the Church, is an important factor in developing a deeper insight into revelation and its implications for our life and world. Therefore it is necessary to be sensitive not only to sacred Scripture and other inner Church resources, but also to God's presence and action in other religious and secular movements and events. To fail to do so would be to exclude a large part of what the Spirit is saying to the churches. This could only impoverish the Church's mission and grasp of revelation.

1. ENCOUNTERING GOD'S REVELATION IN TODAY'S WORLD

A. In the Context of Religious Pluralism

a) Biblical basis:

The Bible affirms God's communication with all people from the beginning of history. Wisdom which "came forth from the mouth of the Most High" was present and active throughout history: "in every people and nation I have gotten a possession" (Sir

24.6). Like the wind, the Spirit's action is universal: blowing where it wills (Jn 3:8). If the people of the cosmic covenant could receive the gift of faith (Heb 11:4-7), we are not surprised to see in them other "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23), by which they "put to death the deeds of the body" (Rom 8:13). This is to be expected since the Christ event has universal repercussions: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19; see also Col 1:19-20; Eph 1:22).

The Bible implicitly acknowledges the divine inheritance in other religions, when it integrates elements from these into the biblical revelation. The biblical narrative witnesses to a fascinating process, by which divine revelation entered into and grew from within already existing cultures and religions in West Asia, without losing its challenge and originality. It was "a wonderful exchange" (AG 22) which anticipated that of the Incarnation. What the people of Israel brought with them into the land of Canaan was a faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, "the Lord our God who brought us and Our fathers up from the land Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Josh 24:17). This historical revelation both challenged and utilized the pre-existing Canaanite culture and religion, which was essentially a nature religion tied to the cycles of nature. In all this interaction the Bible is discerning and critical, so that the following were rejected as being inconsistent with the revelation received: idolatry (Dt 13:19), occult arts and magic (Dt 18:9-14), temple prostitution (Dt 23:18-19), human sacrifice (Dt 12:29-31; Jer 7:31).

b) The Patristic tradition

In affirming, that "doubtless the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified" (AG 4) Vatican II refers to a sermon of St Leo the Great: "It is not that the Holy Spirit only then (at Pentecost) began for the first time to dwell in holy persons, but he wanted that the hearts which were already holy should be more fervent and more copiously filled... the fact that (at Pentecost) his bounty was rich does not mean that his action was new" (Sermon 77/1). Ambrosiaster originated the following saying, which was popular among the medieval theologians: "All truth, no matter where it comes from, is from the Holy Spirit."

In the Fathers, we find on the one hand harsh rebukes for pagan practices which poisoned public life and posed a constant temptation to Christians to fall into superstition and immorality. On the other hand, they speak favorably about many who lived before Christ and thereby elaborate principles which may be applied also to people living after Christ. Their reflections are based on the theology of the *Logos*. While avoiding the pantheistic connotations of the Greek "Logos", they assert his presence and saving action at all times.

A certain priest forwarded to St. Augustine a question posed to him by a non-Christian: if Christ really is the salvation of all, why did he allow people for so many centuries to worship other gods? (*Ep.* 102). He replied with his famous distinction between the sign ("sacramentum") and the reality ("res") signified; the latter refers to the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. The signs change, but point always at the same reality: "Therefore all those whosoever believed in him from the beginning .of the human race, and however they understood him, and lived according to his command in obedience and in justice, wherever and whenever this took place, they found salvation

through him. We believe in him as remaining with the Father and come in the flesh; they believed in him as being with the Father, and to come in the flesh... But only one and the same religion is signified and observed, under other names and signs once and today; formerly more hidden, later more manifest; once by few, now by more." Elsewhere he writes: "The same thing (res) which now is called Christian religion, was also with the old; it was not lacking from the beginning of the human race, until Christ himself came in the flesh; thence the true religion, which existed already, began to be called 'Christian'" (ML 32/603). He continues the same line of thought in his distinction of the two cities, the city of man and the city of God. These two cities are created by two loves: love of self to the denial of God; and love of God to the denial of self.

c) Teaching of the Church **Vatican II**

The Council notes, that "from the start God manifested himself to our first parents" (DV 3). The Council implicitly acknowledges the action of the Holy Spirit in the other religious traditions when it recognizes "seeds of the Word" in them and that they "often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all people" (NA 2). In keeping with the universal scope of Christ's redemptive mission, the Council affirms the presence and operation of the Spirit among all peoples, from the beginning of history: "The Spirit of the Lord fills the earth man is constantly worked upon by God's Spirit" (GS 11; 41). The striving to make life more human is inspired by Christ and his Spirit: "Christ is now at work in the hearts of people through the energy of his Spirit" (GS 38). Indeed, "Grace works in an unseen way" in the hearts of all persons of good will: "For, since Christ died for all persons, and since the ultimate vocation of the person is in fact one and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every person the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (GS 22).

Vatican II speaks of "the spiritual and moral goods... values, in their society and culture" (NA 2) found among the followers of other religions; also "the elements of goodness and truth which such religions possess by God's providence" (OT 16; LG 16). Believers of other religions "preserve in their traditions precious elements of religion and humanity" (GS 92). Good is found to be sown not only in the cultures but also often in the religious rites peculiar to various peoples; "truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God" (AG 9). The seeds of ascetic and contemplative traditions "were sometimes already planted by God in ancient cultures prior to the preaching of the gospel" (AG 18). "Seeds of the word" lie hidden in the national and religious traditions of the Peoples (AG 11) and are "a preparation for the gospel" (LG 16).

At the same time the Council acknowledges that the religions are tainted by "sin" (AG 8), "evil" (AG 9) and "error" (LG 17). So whatever good is found in them, needs to be "healed, ennobled and perfected" by being restored to Christ its maker (LG 9; see also GS 16). Hence the approach to the religions needs to be a discerning one.

Conclusion:

"History is from beginning to end is a history of salvation, that is, a dialogue

initiated by God with humankind from the dawn of time which through distinct phases is leading humankind to God's appointed destiny" (Dupuis 45). There has been 'revelation', an authentic divine-human encounter from the beginning of history, even though its expression may not always be accurate. The Word who enlightens every person from the beginning cannot act contrary to the same Word incarnate in Jesus. Likewise the Spirit whose presence and activity has affected individuals, cultures and religions is "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16.7) and can only act in harmony with what He did and said (Jn 16:14; 14:26). This need not mean that God's action outside the Church is a mere repetition of what God is doing in the Church. For the Christian in India faced with a overabundance of religious teachings and practices, the normative criterion to discern divine truth can only be the person and event of Jesus Christ, 'the Jesus Christ event'.

Given the bodily and social nature of the human person, it was inevitable that people should seek to give expression to what the Word and Spirit have been doing in their lives. This they have accomplished in religious rites, scriptures and traditions: these may be found inadequate or mingled with some errors, when measured against the criterion of the revelation in Christ. This does not detract from the fact that they remain a witness to the marvelous action of the Spirit in the lives of these people. That is why the Bible was able to integrate such a large inheritance from non-biblical religions and cultures. For this reason, the Catholic Church "looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all people" (NA 2).

Grace is universal, but its source, goal and revelation is Christ. Therefore we may adopt the following "Conclusions" of the 'Bombay Conference' (1964). Christian universalism, which is "grounded and centered in Christ", is "equally far removed from narrow intolerant particularism and from enfeebling agnostic indifferentism". The Church must live "not in passive coexistence, but in active proexistence", through fraternal communion ('koinonia'), humble service (' diakonia') and "an attitude of witnessing, and prayer for and with the world" ('kerygma') (Neuner 21-24)

B. In the Context of Events and Movements: Signs of the Times: The phrase 'signs of the times' (Mt 16.2-4) recurs in several documents of Vatican II: GS 4; PO 9; DR 4; DH 15; SC 43; AA 14. The idea appears more often (GS 26). It refers to a theological interpretation of present-day events, with a view to discerning God's call for the Church today. The Council explains how the People of God "endeavors to discern the true signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires which this People share with the people of our age" (GS 11). The prophetic charism provides insight into the real meaning of the events from God's point of view, so as to discern his action and his will for his people. This is a task which involves the whole People of God: "With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish, and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word. In this way, revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and set forth to greater advantage" (GS 44).

It emerges from the foregoing survey of biblical and magisterial texts, that the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit is clearly acknowledged also outside the Church: both in other religious traditions as well as in 'secular' movements which aim at a more humane society "founded on truth, built on justice, and animated by love" (GS 26). Christians are to discern this presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, in order to collaborate better with God's design. Hence the Church desires a dialogue with all people, carried out with love and prudence, "to compel us all to receive the inspirations of the Spirit faithfully and to measure up to them energetically" (GS 92).

a) In the context of globalization

Today people are keenly aware of the phenomenon of 'globalization'. Although the process may be said to have begun centuries ago, with the growing interaction of peoples among themselves, it has accelerated with unprecedented speed in modern times. This interaction is marked by quick communications across all boundaries, by international organizations and by interdependent economies on a world scale, so that it is customary to refer to our 'global village'. No people can live in isolation any more. Such is the direction in which the human family is unavoidably moving. This is the result, not of cosmic, but of historical forces.

. Vatican II drew attention to this reality and tried to show its implications for the Church: "Today the bonds of mutual dependence become increasingly close between all citizens and all the peoples of the world... Although the world of today has a very vivid sense of its unity and of how one person depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces" (GS 4; 84; also 77). This forms the context of the conciliar *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*: "In our times, when every day people are being drawn closer together and the ties between various peoples are being multiplied, the Church is giving deeper study to her relationship with non-Christian religions" (n. 1). Out of the pastoral concern to "foster unity and love among people, and even among nations", the Declaration goes on to stress what human beings have in common, without denying differences.

There is one God and a single plan of salvation, according to which all people are meant to grow into closer communion with each other and with God, in bonds of love and service. This divine plan has been unfolding according to the growth of humankind.

2. TOWARDS FULLNESS OF REVELATION

Jesus as the Word become man fulfils a unique and unsurpassable role as the revealer of the Father. He "fulfills revelation by completing it" (DV 4), so that in him "the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion" (DV 7). He exists as "the fullness of all revelation" (DV 2). At the same time the Council is careful to assert that "the Church constantly moves forward towards the fullness of divine truth" (DV 8), which is an eschatological reality (1 Cor 13:12). Thus Pope John Paul II observes, that "every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the

final Revelation of God" (FR 2). The Church has not yet attained that fullness. This is consonant with the fact that the Holy Spirit leads the Church into all truth (Jn 16:12-15). The perspective is based on the distinction (without separation) between Christ and the Church. Undoubtedly Jesus Christ is personally the fullness of revelation and in him, in the total Jesus Christ event (comprising his person, life, death and resurrection), God has spoken to the world his decisive word: "It is owing to his personal identity as Son of God that Jesus Christ is, properly speaking, the pinnacle and culmination of the revealed word" (Dupuis 249). But the pilgrim Church continues to progress towards "a daily more complete and profound awareness", of that revealed Word (FC 10).

Vatican II has reminded us, that though revelation includes a deposit of truths to be known and assented to, it is much more a personal encounter involving self-surrender. Thus a joint statement (1991) of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples observes: "in the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. This is an unending process" (*Pro Dialogo*, 1996/3: 335). The central and most fundamental data of revelation is full and needs nothing more to be added to it: the paschal mystery which climaxes the historical life and message of the incarnate Word. Yet it remains the unending task of the Church to draw out the full significance and implications of this Jesus Christ event for human being's life and future and for the world. In this task the Church benefits greatly from humanity in general, its cultures and religions: "the Church herself knows how richly she has profited by the history and development of humanity" (GS 44). For this reason, Pope John Paul II can speak of "mutual enrichment" and "mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience" through dialogue with the followers of other religions (RM 55-56). In this relationship of complementarity, the light of the Jesus Christ event will also illuminate the full significance of the riches in the religions.

CHAPTER VII

FAITH, AS RESPONSE TO THE REVEALING GOD

1. INTRODUCTION

Revelation is the self-manifestation of God to humankind with a view to enter into relationship with them. It is a dialogue between God and human person, initiated by God. This calls for a response on the part of the human person. This response is faith. Vatican II describes it in these words: "Obedience of faith must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him" (DV n.5).

In divine faith we accept in the first place a person: Jesus Christ. Faith is our openness and acceptance to the Word Incarnate. So our first effort before arriving at faith is to recognize the presence of this person. This is done through the treatise on revelation. Then we accept Him opening ourselves to Him. This is done through faith, Baptism and the life with the Risen Lord. It is the response, vital response of the human person to Christ (Cfr Dei Verbum). Since faith is the experience of a personal relationship of the human being with God a tension or crisis is inevitable. The human persons are not able to respond to God perfectly. They are not able to detach themselves completely from their sinfulness, a necessary condition for a personal relationship with God. This attachment of the human person to sin can manifest itself in various ways: it can be the attachment to error or to the disorders of will. Here we have the explanation of doctrinal errors and moral deviations. Our understanding of faith will tend to illustrate the personal relationship which implies a total dedication of the human person to God. We shall see it as a process by which he or she links his life with the life of God through Christ, for it is through Christ God communicates to us personally.

2. FAITH IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA:

We always believe and profess our faith within a particular context. Hence it is necessary to clarify our understanding of faith in the context of various trends, movements and phenomena in India; these may be of a religious, social or cultural nature. Taking cognizance of these, helps us to sharpen our own notion of faith and to realize what it means to be a Christian believer in India today.

A. Religious Fundamentalism:

The trend which goes by the term 'fundamentalism' derives its name from the desire to adhere to and safeguard the 'fundamentals' of one's faith, as understood by its proponents. Religious fundamentalism generally results from a deep insecurity and the desire for a clear cut identity. It is not only a theological but also a psychological problem. Fundamentalism can be exploited for political purposes, as has been the case with the *Hindutva* movement in India. One assumes that there is only one way to understand and express the truth. In this context it is well to recall the opening speech of Pope John XXIII at Vatican II: "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another."

B. Religious Syncretism

The term "syncretism" is frequently used in the history of religions. It refers to the coexistence or juxtaposition of incompatible beliefs and practices. It would occur in theology through "the use of individual ideas drawn from different philosophies, without concern for their internal coherence, their place within a system or the historical context" (FR 86). One may or may not be aware of such incompatibility. It may occur between or within religions. Syncretism has sometimes been described as an eclectic mixture of doctrines: even as a 'mishmash of religions'. The possibilities of syncretism increase with

greater inter-mingling of peoples, cultures and religions. It is sometimes consciously fostered for political or social reasons.

Nevertheless the danger of syncretism was real and remains real for Christians in India. They find themselves a minority within a vast population which fervently practices rites and holds religious ideas which may be incompatible with Christian faith and practice. In such a context syncretism can arise out of "a false desire for leveling all religious differences. We might too easily say that all religious attitudes, beliefs, practices are the same and might even be unwilling to give witness to the core of our faith in order not to appear distinct from the other" (*Guidelines*, n. 54). The process of inculturation should not be confused with syncretism, notwithstanding outward appearances.

C. Faith divorced from life: faith and secularism

The human person is effortlessly drawn to the visible, which is easily accessible and calculable. On the other hand, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11.1). It was in virtue of this faith that Abraham "went out, not knowing where he was to go" (Heb. 11.8). The challenge to faith may also come from some fellow Christians who are dominated by a secular spirit: they interpret religious beliefs in a thoroughly this-worldly manner so as to empty them of all faith content. Related to this is the temptation to reduce spirituality to psychological well-being. Secularism may be described as an attitude, a world-view or ideology which seeks to withdraw the worldly realm from the influence of religion. The very idea of God is painted as something alienating and useless, alleging that it deprives humans of their autonomy and responsibility and leads them to neglect efforts to improve this world. Thereby religion itself is dubbed insignificant or meaningless.

Non-believers or humanists sometimes absolutise certain human values like honesty, solidarity, compassion, etc. which are also Gospel values. Contact with non-believers can help us grow in commitment to these values. It can also lead us to examine what in the God we believe in, thereby helping us to purify our religious concepts, images and attitudes. Perhaps it is a false image of God which the non-believer rejects. Some are still dominated by such caricatures of God as: "policeman" concerned only with infringements of the law; "accountant" taking account of our actions with unsettling accuracy; "stop-gap" in the world processes when everything else fails; "torturer" sending people to hell; exacting "task-master". Furthermore, belief often appears in an outmoded garb. This makes belief difficult in an age when the idea of "tradition" has been replaced by that of "progress". Hence referring to the presence of non-believers among us, Vatican II reminds us, that "believers themselves frequently bear some responsibility for this situation. ... To the extent that they neglect their own training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion" (GS 19).

Believers themselves sometimes feel that the forms and formulae of faith no longer fit their problems and experiences. This leads us to a reflection on the worrying dichotomy between faith and human experience. It so happens for some people that their faith and daily life, inclusive of their secular profession, seem to run on parallel lines with no connection between them. The mutual exclusion of faith and daily life can lead to faith with its religious expressions being looked upon as irrelevant to life, or at most as an "opium" (K. Marx) or "a crude sort of spiritual vodka" (Lenin). J. Coventry shows how

much our adherence to Christ's revelation needs to permeate our whole life: "we are in part atheists, when we go about our ordinary work and pass judgment on men and events, as if we had forgotten God for the moment; or we are Pelagians at heart, when we attribute our spiritual insight and achievement to our own efforts and initiative."

The proper vocation of the laity is to "seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God" (LG 31). Their chief apostolate is to integrate their secular involvement into their existence as Christians, to humanize the world in justice, truth and freedom. In this way they will glorify the Father (see Jn 17:4). It is important to help them see the religious and spiritual depths of their involvement in earthly affairs. Vatican II asked that we overcome the "false opposition between professional and social activities on the one hand, and religious life on the other" (GS 43).

Christians are "citizens of two cities". Accordingly the Council quite plainly pointed out the errors at two extremes: "They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come [cf. Heb.13.14], think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities... Nor, on the contrary, are they any less wide of the mark who think that religion consists in acts of worship alone... and who imagine they can plunge themselves into earthly affairs in such a way as to imply that these are altogether divorced from the religious life" (ibid.). The Council also 'indicated how our daily life can be sanctified by the manner in which it is lived: "For all their works, prayers, and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labour, their mental and physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ [1 Pt 2:5]" (LG 34).

D. Faith and popular religiosity:

Popular religiosity or piety refers to "particular expressions of the search for God and for faith", which one finds among the people. The Conference of Latin American Bishops (Puebla, 1979) cautioned against some dangers which threaten the people's piety: "a divorce between faith and life. ... a distorted idea of God; a utilitarian view of certain forms of piety; an inclination, in some places, toward religious syncretism (Nos. 453, 914). Sometimes there may be excessive credulity in regard to visions and prophecies. We must of course understand the fear or anxiety which impels a person to such frantic behaviour. Nevertheless such actions betray a weak faith, which often met with prophetic criticism in the Old Testament (Cfr Hos 2:5,8, 13; 4:12-13; Jer 2:20).

E. Faith and Culture

India is a land of many cultures and the challenge facing the Indian Church and the individual Christian is to live and express the faith in Christ through the local culture. The profession of the Christian faith must not be alienated from one's cultural life. The problem is compounded by the fact that the Christian faith is always mediated in an already inculturated form. Nevertheless from the earliest times the Church sought to express her faith in a diversity of cultural contexts: an effort which gave rise to a variety of rites within the unity of one Catholic Church (FR 70-71). This indeed highlights what

is commonly known in theological circles as 'inculturation'. Yet, "no one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God's revelation" (FR 71). The dynamic relationship between faith and culture challenges the Christians to clarify their identity as both a Christian and a citizen.

F. Faith in the context of inter-religious dialogue

India enjoys a unique place in Asia as the cradle or home of all the major religions in the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and tribal religions. It is here that Zoroastrianism has been kept alive. Hinduism, which is the dominant religion and culture, has given rise to very rich and highly variegated forms of religiosity and piety. The Christian cannot remain insulated or aloof from this religious pluralism. Vatican II drew attention to the situation in our times, "when every day people are being drawn closer together and the ties between various peoples are being multiplied"; inter-religious dialogue is one of the means by which the Church pursues "her task of fostering unity and love among people, and even among nations" (NA 1).

G. Faith in the context of superstition, casteism, discrimination, liberation:

a) Superstition arises from a mutual influence of a magical and religious outlook. Thus magic is interpreted religiously. Or religious matters are interpreted magically, e.g. prayer becomes a magic spell, religious symbols are ascribed a magical causality like fetishes. Customs in the Church are always in danger of degenerating into magic and superstition. (CCC: 2111). Superstition is a flight from the insecurity of life and from the decisions it demands of us. It is an abdication of personal freedom and responsibility; it spares people both intellectual effort and commitment.

b) Casteism, discrimination, liberation: At the heart of Christian faith is God revealing himself in Christ as Father. This necessarily implies on our part an attitude of brother/sister towards our neighbour, expressed in love and justice. In the first place this rules out discrimination against others on grounds of caste, race, religion or condition of life: "show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. .. But if you show partiality, you commit sin" (James 2:1, 9; see also Gal 5:6). Vatican II indicates the same: "We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the Father of all if we refuse to act in a brotherly way toward certain people, created though they be to God's image.

A person's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that Scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God' (1 Jn 4:8)" (NA 5). The CBCI has stated categorically that caste discrimination is "a denial of Christianity"; and delay in facing the issue of caste is "a betrayal of the Christian vocation".

CHAPTER VIII

UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH

1. TERMINOLOGY

In the profane use it stands for accepting something as true without evidence, relying on a testimony as authority. It also means a system of religious truths or a belief system. (e.g. Hindu Faith).

The Old Testament uses two words to indicate faith: *He-emin* and *Batah*. The basic meaning of the term *He-emin* is firmness in accepting a truth with all its consequences (1 Sam 20:19; Prov 13:17; 1 Sam 26:23). The acceptance of the word can take various forms: if it is a command the acceptance will consist in obeying (Dt.9: 4); if it is a promise, the acceptance will consist in trusting (Ps 115: 12). The term *Batah* means to be in a state of security (Ps 25).

The New Testament uses the words *Pistis* and *Pisteuein* to indicate faith. In classical Greek these terms have no religious meaning. They are used to mean simple human trust. In the Gospels these terms signify the trust one ought to have in Jesus and to accept his word as true (Mk 16:15-16), to recognize him as the one who reveals the truth and to submit oneself to him (Mk 1:15; Mt. 3: 2; 4: 17), to be certain and not to doubt, to be assured of the goodness and faithfulness of God (Mk. 11:24; Mt. 21:22). Paul speaks of the act of faith as an act of obedience (Rom. 16: 26) and not merely as enrichment of a truth about God.

2. BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH

From the study of the terms that indicate faith both in profane usage and in the biblical texts, it is clear that faith has a personal character. It is not a mere intellectual knowledge about God, but it is an act of relationship between God and the human person, leading towards the building up of a community. We shall continue the study of the understanding of faith in both the Old and New Testaments in order to see how it has been expressed in the unfolding of the history of salvation.

A. Faith in the Old Testament

a) The faith of Abraham. The community of the Old Testament has its origin in Abraham. His unconditional acceptance of the Word of God in faith makes him become the ancestor, the father of all believers (Rom 4:13-17). How was this faith operative in his life?

i) In the life of Abraham we find that God intervenes and this intervention has a decisive effect on his future. He was asked to leave his country. God replaces the old way of existing of Abraham with a new existence. This is presented as something that is effected by the word of God (Cfr. Gen 12:1 and Gen 12:4). Abraham responds to the initiative of God. Here is a faith of *obedience*.

ii) This faith implies for Abraham a total change in his life. His whole existence is transformed into a life of faith. For Abraham to believe has meant not only one act of obedience but all the consequence of it for the whole of his life. It is a total *commitment*.

iii) This faith implies also trust because it is connected with the promise of salvation on the part of God. The future is also committed to God (Gen 12: 2; 22:15-18). Here we have faith that manifests itself in *trust*.

iv) This faith of Abraham is a faith that is not free from *crisis and tension*. The natural element, the fact that the one who through faith commits oneself to God is a human person who lives in this contingent world is the cause of this crisis and tension. It is therefore obscure and subject to probation.

b) Faith in the events of the Exodus. The exodus marks the beginning of the Israelites as the people of God. In the realization of this event faith plays an important role. They have to believe in the words of God communicated to them through Moses and entirely rely on His power to liberate them from Egypt. We shall see how this faith operates:

i) To believe means to recognize the mission of Moses as God given through the signs that are performed (Ex 4: 30).

ii) To believe means to have the fear of God (Ex.14: 30). The people see the manifestation of the power of God in the crossing of the Red Sea. They realize their powerlessness. They realize that they are in the presence of God who is immensely powerful. They realize that they are in the presence of a God who is holy. In fear, they submit themselves to God in reverence and fear.

iii) To believe means to trust. They become aware of the fact that this powerful God is their redeemer. In their insufficiency they place their complete trust in him. They believe in him and entrust themselves to Him also for the future (Ex 14: 31). This faith was translated into a faithful observance of the laws of Yahweh and was expressed in a permanent and historical relationship between Israel, and Yahweh. In fact their faith in the God of the exodus is always the point of reference whenever their religious identity is in crisis

c) Faith in the life of people. The whole life of the faithful is permeated by their faith in Yahweh. When this faith is weakened they are in trouble. In moments of difficulties they need to renew their faith in Yahweh and not in other sources of strength. At the invasion of the enemies King Ahaz seeks a political solution and asks for help from the King of the Assyrians (2 Kgs 16: 1-18). But Isaiah says that the King should not have any fear because the people and King will be saved if they trust in Yahweh. The people had their origin in faith; so also their existence will be in faith, without any human calculations and political means, but entirely trusting in Yahweh. (See also Is 40: 31.)

Faith in the Old Testament comprises the total attitude of the human being towards Yahweh. The specific aspects included and unified in this general attitude are the following:

- i) Knowledge and acknowledgment of Yahweh, of his saving and dominating power in Israel's history.
- ii) Trust in his promises, along with reverential fear.
- iii) Obedience towards Yahweh's commandments.

A. Faith in the New Testament

In the NT the object of faith is Christ event, which is the Exodus by which the new people of God come into existence. But, by faith we do not merely affirm an event of the past; this event is constantly present to us in the person of the risen Lord; hence our faith is an act of acceptance of Jesus Christ, dead and risen and alive with us today. It is an act of personal relationship with Christ who leads us to the Father. We shall see how it is expressed by the various witnesses of the New Testament

a) Faith in the Synoptics

i) In the Evangelists we find a gradual evolution in the doctrine of faith, as present in the preaching of Jesus. In the beginning of his mission, he does not demand faith in his person, but faith in God, whose kingdom has come. But in the course of his preaching he shows that the kingdom of God is closely connected with his person. Thus the problem of faith becomes a matter of one's relationship with Christ's person.

ii) The main characteristics of faith, according to Synoptics are

1) Faith is concerned with a fundamental personal decision: It is concerned with a radical choice, leading to a radical conversion of the human person (Mk 1:15) by which the human person enters into an irrevocable and indispensable relationship with Christ's person (Mt 10: 32). It is connected with one's salvation (Mk 16:16).

2) Faith is essentially saving faith. It is connected with one's salvation (Mk 16: 16). The miracles of Jesus which are the manifestations of his saving presence in our midst always are performed in the context of faith (Mk 9: 22-24). This faith is not simply faith in God, but in Jesus. Through faith the human person participates in the saving power of God manifested in Christ (Mk 2: 5.)

3) The Dynamic aspects of Faith according to the Synoptics are the following: They speak of faith *as hearing* the word of Jesus (Mk 4: 9; 7:16). This hearing should lead people to a more profound understanding of the economy of salvation (Mt 7: 14; 8:17, 21). They speak of faith *as the following* of Christ. This does not consist only in being docile to the words of Jesus, but also includes the promptness to leave everything and follow Christ (Mt 10: 28; Lk 14: 27) On the other hand the following of Jesus cannot be separated from listening to his words. In fact the Synoptics explain the connection between faith and following of Christ by showing that eternal life consists in becoming his disciples (Mk 10: 17, 21). This faith is also a gift of God; but this does not free us from our responsibility (Mt 11: 27; 16: 17; Lk 22: 33).

From all these it follows that for the Synoptics faith is a fundamental reality of Christian life. Jesus does not merely propose a doctrine which should be learned as a theory. He wants to reach the human person. To believe, therefore is to become the disciple of Christ with all its consequences. Faith is not a static reality; it implies living a

life that is wanted by Jesus. The union of the individuals with God and their efficacy in ministry will depend on the degree of their attachment and love through faith, for Christ (Mk 9: 22-24).

b) Faith in St. Paul

We can discover the following structure in the Pauline faith.

i) Faith is closely connected with the doctrine of justification. (Rom 1: 16; Rom 5:13,28.) Faith is the acceptance of the power of God that is capable of justifying the human person. So it is opposed to all types of self-reliance. Faith is not something that the human person offers to God, but it is an act of submission to the work of justification performed by God in Christ.

ii) It is an act of obedience: (Rom 1: 8; 1: 5.). It implies, to a certain extent the renouncing of the autonomy of human intelligence. This places the human person in need of trusting in God. (Gal 3: 6; Rom 9: 33). This trust is in a God who has done wonderful things in the history of the people and will continue to do it in the course of the centuries. This is a Christological trust in as much as the *mirabilia Dei*, the historical intervention of God, is manifested in the person Christ (2 Cor 3; 4). Since it is an act of obedience to God it has its moments of obscurity. Faith means to hope against hope (Rom 4:18-25). It is also an act of courage, but the basis for this courage is in God. The human persons entrust themselves to God. It is not a leap in the dark, but it is a leap into God whose plans, although are not known to us, are the outcome of His eternal love (Eph 1: 4-7). This kind of faith would call for a total dedication of the human person to God.

iii) This faith is closely connected with hope, because the object of our faith is the reality still to be revealed and still to be achieved (Rom 1:17). Our faith is a participation in the death of Christ. If so, it will be consummated only in our complete participation in the glorification of Christ (Rom 6: 8)

iv) Faith has also an intellectual aspect. We accept Kerygma first by our intelligence (Rom 10:9). Therefore faith has a determinate doctrinal content. It is not a vague acceptance of an indeterminate reality.

v) Faith is closely connected with Christian life. Faith determines the whole life. Christ lives in the hearts of the faithful through faith (Eph 3: 17). Everything that is not of faith is sin (Rom 14: 23). The life of the Christian in order to be authentic must be a life of faith (Gal 2: 20).

c. Faith in St. John. John writes his gospel in order that we may believe (Jn 20: 31). John the Baptist is sent as a witness for Jesus in order that all may believe through him (Jn 1: 7). John speaks of coming to Jesus. This is the same as believing Jn 5: 40; 6: 37, 41f). To follow Jesus is to believe in him (Jn 8:12) John's idea of faith is dynamic. He uses the noun *pistis* only in his letter (1 Jn 5: 4). At all other times he has the verb *pisteuein*. It implies the involvement of the whole person. The structure of faith in St. John can be presented as follows:

i) To believe is to hear the word: He speaks not merely of a material hearing (Jn 8:43-47; 18:37). In this act of hearing the true disciple is able to distinguish the false

voice from the true. There is reciprocity between the acts of the one who speaks and the one who listens.

ii) *To believe is to recognize* (Jn 11:42; 17:8). It is here that faith reaches its perfection. It comes here very clear to the knowledge that exists between the Father and the Son. The perfection of faith is precisely in its nearness to this knowledge.

iii) *Faith in John is very personal* (Jn 12:11; 2:11) in as much as it refers to God the Father and to Jesus, His son, in his personal intervention in the history of humanity. In this personal aspect of faith we find that there are the following elements: security, trust in as much as to believe in Jesus is to give oneself to him, faith as a free gift and free choice of God on the part of the human person.

iv) *Faith lays the foundation for the new eschatological existence for man*. Those who believe in Christ must renounce their personal decisions, to their glory; they must renounce their sense of security. They are in this world; but they should live as if they were out of this world. Faith is for John the victory over the world (Jn 15:19). The one who believes has already eternal life (Jn 6: 40). The disciples, who believe in Christ and follow him, have already the joy and peace in spite of their sadness and worries.

v) *Those who believe must keep the commandments*. Those who have faith have a new existence. The commandments should not be taken as legal impositions, but as necessary consequences of an internal urge in the one who has entered this new state (1 Jn 3: 22; 1 Jn 1: 6).

d) Faith in the letter to the Hebrews

i) Heb 10:19-25: The Christians should have absolute trust in Jesus, the high Priest because in his blood we all have access to the Holy of Holies. This is effected in two ways: through his human nature and through his powerful intercession. Our faith is therefore in our acceptance of Jesus at our Baptism, for it is at Baptism that the saving power of Christ's humanity as well as his intercessory power with the Father is revealed to us.

ii) Heb 10:26-31: One who does not have faith and is in danger of being in apostasy, such a person is punished.

iii) Heb 10:32~39: Believers are exhorted to persevere motivated by the Christians who have suffered for their faith and lived by the promise of the reward that was expected.

iv) Heb 11:1. Faith is the objective foundation (implying objective certainty) of the celestial realities. This verse places greater stress on the eschatological aspect of our faith.

v) Heb 11: 2-11: Examples of faith in the OT are brought forward. Of all these the example of Abraham is of greater importance.

vi) Heb 11:12-16: The faith of the Patriarchs is a true prefiguration of the Christian faith. They see the fulfillment of the promise from afar, but die without actually arriving at it. If they did not really arrive it is because they were looking forward to a better land of promise, of which the Promised Land was a figure. In verse 39, we see the fulfillment of these longing of the patriarchs in the Christian economy. Christ becomes the true converging point of faith both in the Old and New Testament.

vii) Heb12: 1-3: Christians therefore should fix their eyes on Christ because their faith in Christ is the full realization of that economy of faith which was inaugurated in the O.T.

Both in the OT and in the NT faith expresses in the first place as total personal relationship of the human person to God in Christ. Hence to believe in the first place is not believe something, but to believe in somebody and entrust oneself to somebody. But this would call for accepting the words of Jesus. Here we have the dogmatic character. The dogmatic aspect of faith should be considered as a means to reach the person.

3. FAITH IN THE PATRISTIC TRADITION OF THE CHURCH

A. The Early Christian Fathers

In continuation of the biblical doctrine, faith in Jesus is the source and centre of all Christian life. The emphasis goes (against the Gnostics) to the humanity of Jesus Christ: in the true Incarnation and passion of the Saviour in whom we have new life: Jesus Christ the beginning and end of life. "For faith is the beginning and the end is love and God is the two of them brought into unity" (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 14). "I give glory to Jesus Christ, the God who has imbued you with such wisdom. I am well aware that you have been made perfect in unwavering faith, like men nailed, in body and spirit, to the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and confirmed in love by the blood of Christ". (Ignatius: *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 1).

In the mind of the Fathers faith is still primarily the act of personal commitment, the '*fides qua creditur*'. In human salvation Christ constitutes the objective order of God's plan, whereas faith is human being's personal move. Ignatius uses the simile of the edifice: "Like the stones of a temple, cut for a building of God the Father, you have been lifted up to the top by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, and the rope of the Holy Spirit. For your faith has drawn you up, and charity has been the road leading to God". (Ignatius *Letter to the Ephesians* 9ff).

Still in the struggle against the heresies, the authentic content of revelation is of great significance, and hence the intellectual character of faith becomes more prominent. Already Polycarp writes: "Everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an antichrist; and whoever does not confess the witness of the Cross is of the devil; and whoever perverts the sayings of the Lord, to his own evil desires and says there is neither resurrection nor judgement, that one is the first-born of Satan" (Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians* 7, 1). Irenaeus defends the content of faith as it is handed down by tradition against the heresies: "Spread out through the universe, to the end of the earth, the Church has received from the Apostles and their disciples that faith which is in one God, the almighty Father etc... the Church preserves this preaching as she has received it, and this faith as we have explained it... As there is only one and the same faith, he who knows much about it does not amplify it nor does he who know little diminish it" (*Adv. Haer.* 1,10).

B. Syriac Patristic Notion of Faith

Syriac Christian notion of faith is based on the historical and meta-historical understanding of the biblical reality of salvation. The old Israel believed in Yahweh who intervened in their history for their liberation, yet remained invisible. All interventions of God in history were symbolic, signifying and 'orienting to the signified reality of a new covenant and a promised land with a new mode of existence. That new covenant and new mode of existence are made manifest in Christ. Those who believed in him were saved. Basically Christian faith is faith in Christ.

a) Faith as Existential Building up on Christ, the Corner Stone

Faith, in the Syriac Christian understanding, is a relational process. It is one's own building up on the 'corner stone', Christ (cf. Lk 20: 17; 1 Pet 2:6-9; Aphrahat, *Dem* I, 2). In Christ Jesus, divinity that gives and humanity that receives meet in a salvific mystery. Believing is a relational process. Christian faith is a relational building up because faith is composed of a divine gift received within a human response that builds upon the divine gift, the 'image and likeness Of God'. Hence, according to St. Ephrem faith is a relational reality beyond all conceptual perceptions. Trinitarian relationship is the pattern of faith relationship. Through faith, in the believing one, the paternity of the Father is imprinted, the essence of the Son is mingled and the sanctification of the Spirit is assured (*On Faith* 13:2).

This Trinitarian factor in faith is not a mere guarantee alone but a real achievement and perfection. This reality is assured in the formula of Baptism (Mt 28: 19); moreover, the constitution of human beings in body, soul and spirit also conforms to this truth (*On Faith* 13: 3-5). Faith grows in a person as a bird grows from the womb of the mother bird to egg in the nest and to the flying out bird singing its proper melody (*On Faith* 18:3). Faith is like a building built with many works with many things in many colours. "The Foundation of our whole faith is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true stone. And upon this very stone, the faith is laid. And upon the faith, the whole building rises until it is perfected" (*Dem on Faith* I, 2). The one who believes travels on the road of faith by building upon the steps of love, hope, justification and perfection. This building up is for becoming a 'house' and a 'temple' for the dwelling of Christ as Jeremiah saw (Jer 7:4, 5; *Dem* I, 3). The mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer develops through faith (cf. Lev 26:12; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Jn 14:20).

It is the faith in Christ and the works accordingly that make each one a 'ploughed land' where the seeds would bear thirty, sixty and hundred fold (cf. Mt 13:8). The proper relational and covenantal attitude of faith with commitment removes all forms of scrutiny and disputation from the heart (*On Faith* 53:6, 7). "The man who becomes a house and a dwelling place for Christ should see to what is fitting for the service of Christ who dwells in him and with what things he will please him" (*Dem* I,4). What is pleasing to Christ are pure fasting, pure prayer, love, almsgiving, humility, virginity, holiness, wisdom, hospitality, simplicity, perseverance, moderation and purity which are effects of faith. "All these things are asked for by faith which is placed on the rock of the true stone,

which is Christ. These deeds are required by Christ, the king who dwells in people who through these works are built up" (*Dem I,4*). .

b) Faith: Proclamation and Acts of Faith

Regarding works of faith, Ephrem finds human body as a boat and boatman who travels and collects merchandise for selling with bodily senses and faculties as treasures of faith (*On Faith 80:8*). As the arc of Noah was for his salvation, faith is the arc for human salvation. Like Noah who believed and became saved on his ship, all human beings can travel with faith, the ship, on one's journey to salvation (*On Faith 49:6*). A human being as a mariner travels on the boat of faith to the shores of salvation. As a ship travels against the waves, so the one with faith (ship) travels against all waves of odd experiences and reaches salvation (*On Faith 43:6*). Faith is a road; charity and hope are places of refuge (*On the Church 34:4*); love and prayer are needed to ascend to God (*On Faith 4:11*).

c) Faith, the Soul of our Soul (Second Soul)

As body needs soul and bread for life, soul needs faith, and faith in order to live needs grace (*On Faith 80:9*). Body needs soul, soul needs faith and faith lives by God (*On Faith 80:2-3*;). Without faith soul will be like a 'dead body' and that would be the invisible death. Faith is a 'soul' to the human soul, a 'second soul' (*On Faith 80:1-5*). As body needs bread, faith needs moral behaviour and true faith grows through proclamation and bears fruit in acts of faith. Faith is the light to see the hidden/mysterious matters (*kasyata*) by the power of the 'eye of faith' (*On the Church, 24:3*). Many, in the biblical history, have seen with the 'eye of faith', like Abraham and the prophets, the Magi, the Samaritan woman, the Canaanite woman, the widow of Naim and others who were illumined with the 'eye of faith'. Faith is often seen as 'light' and disbelief as 'darkness'. It is in this respect

Eve and Mary are seen as the 'two eyes of the world'. Eve, by yielding herself to the tempter, disbelieved her Lord and became the source of darkness and death in the world. Eve is called the 'darkened eye of the world'. Mary, on the other hand, by believing the message of the angel, became the source of life and 'Light', Christ, in the world. Hence Mary is the 'Illumined eye of the world' (*On the Church, 37:3-5*). Thus, Eve is the 'source of death' and Mary is the 'source of life' in the world (*On the Church, 35: 1*). It is the faith that redeems and perfects all: The antithetical parallelism between Eve and Mary, in this respect, explains the central role of faith in the history of salvation in the Old and New dispensations.

B. Augustine

a) For Augustine to believe is a personal experience

i) *In the first place Augustine had a very vivid experience of the authority.* The decisive element for faith is authority, which demands faith. In the act of faith of a

Christian this authority is concretely present in God who demands faith on His own authority, in Christ, in the Church and in the Holy Scripture.

ii) *Augustine had a personal crisis of faith.* This led him to seek for solution of the problem relating faith to reason. He sought it in Manichaeism and then fell into scepticism: "And you know, Honoratus, that for no other reason did we fall in with such men than that they kept saying that by pure and simple reason, apart from all formidable authority, they would lead their willing listeners on to God and free them from all error. For, what else forced me for almost nine years, during which time I rejected the religion which my parents had implanted in me as a child, and to follow these men and diligently to listen to them, save that they said we were terrified by superstition, and that faith was demanded of us before reason, while they on the other hand, were forcing faith on no one without first hunting for and disentangling the truth" (*De Utilitate Credendi ad Honoratum* 1:2).

iii) *Augustine's conversion to faith gave him a very vivid experience of the power of Grace.*

b) The constituent elements of the art of believing in Augustine

i) *Believing, for Augustine, is determined by the authority.* Authority demands faith and prepares us for reason. Reason leads us to the understanding and knowledge: "Whatever we understand accordingly, we owe to reason; what we believe to authority" (*De ut Cred* 11: 25). To believe, therefore, implies submission of the human person to authority. Believing is distinct from understanding.

ii) *There is a close connection between believing and understanding.* It is like passing from an internal reality to an external reality. Faith is more internal; it becomes more and more external as we receive evidence, until in heaven this faith will be transformed into vision.

iii) *Augustine distinguishes 'fides quae creditur' from 'fides qua creditur'.* On the basis of this distinction the intellectual character of faith can be developed. He offers the classical formula. Faith is '*cum assensione cogitare*', to think with assent (*De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* 2, 5) which implies the mutual relation of commitment and understanding which becomes the basic problem of the analysis of the act of faith: "Nobody believes something unless he has first recognized that he should believe it" (op.cit). Augustine proposes the problem in an antithesis of the rationalistic and fideistic approach:

"You say I should understand in order to believe; I say, believe that you may understand. Here is our controversy: let us approach the judge, the prophet may judge, rather God through the prophet, and let both of us be silent. What we have to say is stated: I should understand to believe, and believe, I say, to understand. The prophet may answer: unless you believe, you will not understand". Faith joins the human person with God's supreme knowledge: "It is not a small part of knowledge to be united to Him who

knows: He has the eyes of knowledge, you should have the eyes of believing, what God sees you must believe".

iv) *Augustine sees the image of the Trinity in the believer.* In faith there is the intentionality, namely, the tending of the mind to the object, which in this case is God; then there is the knowledge of this God and this knowledge is followed by love. So faith is dynamic and this dynamism is an image of the dynamism that exists in the bosom of the Trinity and therefore by faith we receive the image of God, and we, as it were, enter into relationship with the Holy Trinity.

v) *Faith is different from vision.* But there is no opposition between faith and vision because our faith is tending to become vision. The vision is not therefore the destruction of faith, but a continuation of the faith.

4. SCHOLASTIC PERIOD

St. Thomas does not develop a critical examination of the act of faith. He describes faith as a theological virtue. It is the *inchoatio vitae*, the beginning of life. Hence faith is salvific. The object of faith is God, for the beatific vision will consist in seeing God face to face. As a consequence of this St. Thomas insists very much on the supernatural aspect of faith. God's assistance in faith consists both in the exterior revelation and its support by miracles; but also in the inner illumination which affects both intellect and will, and leads to a *cognitio per connaturalitatem* (connatural knowledge) by which human beings share in the divine life.

5. FAITH IN THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

A. The Council of Trent

a) The historical background: Luther and the Reformers

i) *Luther*

The starting point for the understanding of Luther is his doctrine of justification. Against any form of human self-reliance and confidence in one's own works, Luther maintains the human person's essential sinfulness, and total incapability of moving towards justification. Justice is exclusively God's work and gift; it is offered to human beings through Jesus Christ, and can be received only in absolute faith that God has forgiven them.

He distinguishes two forms of faith: "Here (in the context of forgiveness) faith means not merely historical knowledge, as it is found also in godless people, or even in the devil; it rather means faith which believes not only the history, but the effect of history, viz. the article of the forgiveness of sins: that through Christ we have grace, justice and forgiveness of sins. He who knows that through Christ, God is propitious to

him; he truly knows God, knows that God takes care of him, calls on God and is not without God as the Gentiles". (Confessio Augustana XX). In its very essence faith is based on the word of God, and on nothing else. Hence, as the word of God addresses the whole human person, intellect and will, so the response also consists in a total human adherence to God's Word.

a) Luther's Subjectivism

Luther was right in placing faith totally into the context of justification. However his accents are laid too strongly on the individual and the entire Creed is interpreted in terms of God's gift to 'me' which gives a strongly subjective trend to his theology. About the Eucharist he says: "When I receive the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, he clearly says: 'This is the new covenant'. Here I must believe with certainty that grace and forgiveness of sin, as promised in the NT, are mine. And this I must accept in faith" (*Apol. Confess. Aug. XIII*). The error of Luther consists in the '*fides jiducialis* ' which means that sins are forgiven to anyone who speaks of one's confidence and certainty that one's sins are forgiven and relies on this confidence alone for salvation.. For him this is the saving faith.

b) Luther excludes charity from faith

In his insistence on justification through faith only, without works, Luther excludes, also charity from justifying faith: "Charity must follow faith (he quotes Gal 5: 6: *fides quae per caritatem operator*, faith working through love). But it would be wrong that through trust in this charity, or on account of this charity we receive forgiveness and reconciliation, just as we do not receive forgiveness of sins on account of other works which follow faith, but through faith only in the strict sense we receive forgiveness of sins because the promise cannot be received but through faith" (Conf. Aug). Thus charity is counted among the other works of justice.

He does admit the need of works, in accordance with James 1:18; because without the work, faith remains dead. But they are fruits of justice, not its root. If charity were really man's own, he would be right. But charity is the full response to God's saving love: If God's word is the revelation of God's love; the full response can lead to Justification. In fact, the way Luther describes living faith as adherence to God's word, it includes the attitude of charity, and Bouyer is right when he calls the exclusion of charity from justifying faith "the least defensible of Luther's negations" (in *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, p.144).

ii) Calvin. He takes up Luther's position, and adds mainly two elements:

1) On the basis of his doctrine of absolute predestination he says that faith is given only to those who are predestined, and therefore cannot fail.

2) Faith is a vivid inner experience. It reveals itself in 'conversion' and implies the renewal of the entire outlook on life. This idea has been unfolded throughout the history of Protestantism and is expressed in all revival movements.

b. The Conciliar Doctrine

In the controversy with the Reformers faith is seen in the context of salvation. In spite of the polemic character of some statements (against *'fides fiducialis'*) the Conciliar texts offer a harmonious picture of the meaning of faith in the Christian life.

i) The central text is ch.8 of Decree on Justification CF 1935 about the place of faith in justification: "We are justified by faith because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb 11: 6). Given this central position, to which the Reformers agree, specific statements are added which mark the Catholic position against the Reformers.

ii) The nature of faith is described so as to include explicitly the intellectual element: The process of Justification is described in ch 6 (CF 1930): "Awakened and assisted by divine grace, they conceive faith from hearing and are freely led to God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised, especially that the sinner is justified by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus". Note that faith is not presented as a merely intellectual assent, but as a movement towards God under God's grace. Still, the assent to the objective revelation is emphasized.

iii) Further specification is added in ch.7. Charity must be connected with faith, as it is essential for justification. "Faith without hope and charity neither unites a person perfectly with Christ, nor makes one a living member of his body". Here justification through faith is essentially linked to the newness of life which is animated by charity. The fullness of man's response to revelation in Christ implies the bond of charity.

iv) In this context the *fides fiducialis* i.e., the faith 'my sins are forgiven, is rejected (in ch.9 CF 1936 and the canon 9-12) Faith consists in the acknowledgement of Christ as Savior; but "if anyone says that, to attain the remission of sins, one must believe with certainty and without any hesitation based on one's weakness and lack of disposition, that one's sins are forgiven" or "if anyone says that a person is absolved from sins and is justified because one believes with certainty to be absolved and justified; or that no one is truly justified except one who believes oneself to be justified, and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone" such a person is outside the Catholic Church (can.13 & 14. CF 1963 – 1964). Council also rejected the doctrine that holds faith as personal predestination, against Calvin. "If anyone says that one who has been reborn and justified is bound by faith to believe oneself to be certainly among the number of the predestined, anathema sit (can. 15 CF 1965)

v) On the other hand, faith has a meaning for justification even if it is not alive with charity. Luther considered faith, the only link with Christ: As long as it is there, man is justified, The Tridentine Council insists that charity is essential for Justification; hence in ch, 15 (CF 1945) and canons 27-29 (CF 1977 - 1979) it teaches: "It must be asserted... that the grace of justification once received is lost not only by unbelief, which causes the loss of itself, but also by any other mortal sin, even though faith is not lost". (CF 1945). Thus the Church maintains that faith as the radical acceptance of Christ is the first bond

of God. It must be perfected by charity; but even in a state of sin, faith may remain, and from it the life in Christ may be renewed if only it is perfected by charity.

B. I Vatican Council

a) The Historical Background

i) Kant and Schleiermacher

The negative element of Kant's influence on modern philosophy and theology is his denial of any rational proof for the existence of God, and generally of religious realities. Theoretical reason is valid only within the sphere of phenomena. This doctrine was almost universally accepted in the non-catholic world.

The positive contribution consists in the new foundation for the religious reality. The absolute character of the ethical demands, the categorical imperative, implies the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and man's freedom. After Kant, the religious world is disconnected from the world of empirical phenomena and rational argumentation and finds its justification in itself. Schleiermacher bases religion on the inner experience of human being's total dependence. Faith, the basic act of the Christian life, has no justification from reason or history, but must be justified in itself.

ii) *Rationalism - Semirationalism*

Whereas Rationalism maintains the autonomy of human reason, Semirationalism tries to find a formula in which faith keeps its place. The doctrine of Hermes is important for the understanding of the 19th century theology on faith. Hermes admits divine revelation in which God's economy of salvation is made known to human beings. According to him the motive of faith cannot consist in mere authority. This would destroy the firmness of the assent as, according to rationalistic principles, only evidence can make an assent firm. Hence Hermes admits the assent to revelation ultimately on the basis of human being's own reasoning. The motive of faith lies not in God but in man, and so he maintained the basic principle of rationalism.

b) The Conciliar Doctrine

Whereas in the Tridentine period, the context is the relationship between faith and justification, at the time of Vatican I, it is the problem of knowledge, the intellectual conception of faith with its epistemological implications.

i) *The nature of faith* (Session III, ch. 3):

The Council affirmed the possibility to prove God's existence by reason, against the Traditionalists (CF 113). Faith is described as intellectual assent, motivated by divine authority, against Rationalists (CF 118, 125-126) The act of faith is *rationi consentaneum* i.e. possible for human being as a rational being and justifiable before reason on account

of the 'exterior signs' i.e. the miracles. This is against Traditionalists and Rationalists (CF 119; 127-128). Divine assistance is needed for faith (CF 120)

Faith is necessary for salvation. To make acceptance of and perseverance in faith possible, God has established the Church as custodian and teacher of the faith (CF 122). The Church is also the guarantee of the integrity of faith, and she herself is the irrefutable testimony of her credibility and divine mission (CF 123). God gives the grace of perseverance in faith; He does not abandon those He has chosen. Hence no one can be justified in relinquishing the faith which he has received in the Church (CF.124).

ii) The relationship between faith and reason (Session III ch. 4).

There is a twofold order of knowledge: natural knowledge by reason, and supernatural by revelation of divine mysteries (CF 131). Reason has its task not only in the natural sphere, but also with regard to divine mysteries, to penetrate them by analogous reasoning, and see them in their mutual relationship. However, it never can fully apprehend the mysteries, even after their revelation. This is against Semirationalism (CF 132). There can be no contradiction between faith and reason (CF 133). The Church has the task to watch over the deposit of faith, and to proscribe errors of philosophy which are contrary to revealed truth (CF 134).

There can be no conflict between faith and reason, but they support each other. Similarly the Church is not an enemy, rather she is the fervent guardian of cultures (CF 135) Science, on the other hand, is meant to develop, without, however, stepping beyond its own limits and entering into the sphere of faith, thus creating confusion and disturbing the wliety of the Church which has to preserve the truth of revelation (CF 135).This doctrine has been deepened, and much developed in the II Vatican Council (See *Gaudium et Spes* n.36, and n.53ff).

C. Oath against the Errors of Modernism (1910)

Modernists start their interpretation of faith by affirming that the foundation of faith is the inner religious experience. It is neither philosophical certitude nor historical certitude. Faith, according to Modernists means the piercing through exterior experience of life to find the deepest reality of human existence. Modernism conceived faith too much as inner realization, not sufficiently as response to God's free self-revelation. Also the intellectual element was neglected.

The Oath against the errors of Modernism rejects the Modernist understanding of faith in these words: "Faith is not a blind impulse of religion welling up from the depth of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and the inclination of a morally conditioned will, but the genuine assent of the intellect to a truth which is received from outside 'by hearing'. In this assent, given on the authority of the all-truthful God, we hold to be true what 'has been said, attested to, and revealed by the personal God, our creator and Lord" (CF 143/5)

D. II Vatican Council

The Tridentine Council dealt with faith only in the context of justification which did not allow a full development of the problems. Vatican I dealt explicitly with faith, but under an almost exclusively epistemological angle. There was urgent need to see faith again in its original meaning as response to Divine Revelation, and from this context to unfold its Christological and ecclesiological significance. In Vatican II, Revelation is proposed as salvation history and as God's action. Faith is the response of the human person. The text contains the following main elements (DV 5).

a) Faith is obedience, submission of human person under God's Word and God's Word is God himself revealed to human beings.

b) "By faith man freely commits his entire self to God". It is a total self commitment, comprising the whole person, intellect and will.

c) It comprises intellectual assent: "willingly assenting to the Revelation given by him". The intellectual element is included, and constitutes the objective aspect, both of revelation and of faith. But it is in no way isolated.

d) Faith must be preceded by the "interior helps of the Holy Spirit" This help, however, does not make the human person's act irrational, rather it consists in "opening the eyes of the mind", i.e. in giving the faculty to see the truth which for human nature would not be accessible.

e) The same spirit assists the believer in unfolding the faith through a deeper understanding, and making it bear fruit.

E. Encyclical of John Paul II: *Fides et Ratio*

The encyclical of John Paul II deals with the relationship of faith with reason in the multi-religious and pluricultural milieu of today. He deal with this problem also with a view to answer some questions that have arisen in the philosophical and scientific context in which there seems to be a dichotomy between faith and scientific knowledge, be it philosophical or technological. The whole encyclical deal with this subject under its various aspects in the light of Christian tradition and sound philosophical principles and shows that both faith and reason have their origin in God and therefore they cannot be opposed to one another. But there are certain criteria to be followed in the understanding of their proper roles.

F. FAITH IN MODERN PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

a) Karl Barth

i) Rejection of natural Theology: The most powerful affirmation of faith as response to God's word comes from, K. Barth who reacts sharply against any form of 'natural theology'. God's word stands in itself, and we know nothing of God except what He Himself tells us. True, the Word of God is addressed to human beings, but thereby it becomes in no way dependent on them, or accessible from any human or natural knowledge.

ii) Faith always remains God's free gift, and never becomes subject to human disposition. The content of faith never is the 'object' which can be studied, interpreted etc. as if it were handed over into the hands of human beings, or of the Church. "The concept 'truths of revelation' in the sense of Latin propositions 'given and sealed once for all by divine authority in wording and meaning, is theologically impossible.

b) Paul Tillich

Faith is to accept oneself as accepted. (*The courage to be*, London 1952). Human being is accepted by God without reserve, as he or she is, as sinner. Their sins are condemned, but they are no obstacle for acceptance through God. God is absolute, forgiving love. This basic biblical truth must, however, be translated into existential language. Nothing is more destructive of human personality than not being accepted. The child already develops resentment, an attitude of hateful revenge, against anyone who rejects it: parents, school, etc. The securities (economic, social, and professional) point ultimately to the radical insecurity: human being's existence faced with death. Here is the human beings' ultimate concern, the problem of their very being. Faith means the acceptance of the ultimate meaning of existence, that we are accepted by God, and have life in Him.

CHAPTER IX

ACT OF FAITH

We shall begin by analyzing the act of faith as an act of personal relationship which implies a total dedication of the human person to God. We shall see it as a process by which: human persons link their life with the life of God through Christ, for it is through Christ God communicates to us personally.

I. FAITH, AN ACT OF PERSONAL ENCOUNTER.

It is true that we are dealing here with a relationship that is unique. It cannot be compared to any personal relationship that exists in the created order of things. And yet we apply also here the law of analogy. In order to understand the human-divine relationship it is necessary to explore the working of human personal relationship and then from there analogically to apply to the supernatural field of faith. For this reason we shall first deal with the personal relationship that exists in the act of human faith.

A. Personal relationship in the act of human faith In order to understand the true meaning of faith in human relationship it is necessary to understand the different meaning of '*credere*' or 'to believe' .

a) Personal faith and opinion: In the ordinary language 'to believe' can signify many things. Sometimes it means nothing but an opinion that is more or less founded on reality. Thus e.g., we believe that the weather will be good tomorrow. In this case 'to believe' is more like an act that is based on a guess. It is an opinion. When we say, on the

other hand, to our mother: 'I believe you' this word 'believe' has quite a different meaning. In this case I accept the truth on the testimony of my mother, of a person. This cannot be reduced to an opinion based on a guess. Here the foundation of our belief is a person. .

b) Personal faith and knowledge based on testimony: The knowledge that is based on testimony is had when logical conclusion is drawn from many premises. This conclusion will give us the persuasion that the affirmation of someone is true. In the case of personal faith, the importance is given not to the arguments that prove the statement of somebody true, but to the very person of the individual that makes the statement. Hence we can have two different objects of faith in an act of personal faith: the primary object is the person and the secondary object is the affirmation of the person. But these two objects do not form two different objects artificially put together. The secondary object depends very much on the primary. We accept the statement of a person because we believe the person.

B. The different types of personal faith. We shall distinguish here three types of personal faith:

a) Personal faith in the unknown persons: This is very little different from the knowledge that one has from testimony. Here we do not search into the validity of a statement through a process of elaborate investigation. We accept the affirmation of the person by mere intuition of the person. This kind of faith is had only in matters that are of little importance, and in matters in which an absolute certainty is not required by its very nature.

b) Personal faith in known persons: This is the faith that we place in colleagues, and collaborators. Here we have greater intuition of persons and we are dealing with more important matters. Here by act of faith the individual is more guided by the knowledge of the persons and their ability to tell the truth.

c) Personal faith in those who love each other: This is the highest grade of personal faith. This is found between mother and son, friend and friend, husband and wife. Here the primary object of faith is the person, and secondary object is what the person reveals about oneself.

C. The elements that constitute an act of personal human faith

a) Faith and knowledge of the person: The knowledge that we have of the person influences very much the object of our faith. We shall not be able to describe a person adequately to another. It is more a matter of intuition. This knowledge is the result of a vital union between us and the person, a reality which our words will not be able to express properly. It, in a certain sense, transcends all the conceptual categories. It is a matter of experience. It is intuitive knowledge and it precedes the act of faith. This intuitive knowledge of the person influences our certitude. Certainly this certitude is different from the one that we have from a syllogism.

b) The act of faith: The act of faith is based on the intuitive knowledge of the person. I accept the person and affirm his or her personality in its relationship to me. I believe the person. I affirm the truth basing myself on the person.

D. The structure of a supernatural personal act of faith:

Faith establishes a relationship between the human person and the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Here we can distinguish two elements in the act of faith: first, the act by which the human person recognizes himself as related to God; secondly the response of human persons to this God who is constitutively related to them.

a) The act of faith as an act of recognition of God: faith as a gift of God. We can establish the existence of other human beings independently of our relationship to them. But I cannot posit God outside of my relationship to Him, for this relationship is constitutive of my very being. I come upon God as the ground of my being. Faith in the first instance consists in recognizing this basic reality of my very being and existence. This recognition itself is a gift from God. Left to ourselves we are absolutely incapable of knowing God in a way adequate for our salvation. "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me" (John 6: 44). "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).

b) The act of faith as an act of response to God. Response differs from answer. The former is to a person, while the latter need not to be a person; it can be to a question which may be impersonal. We can distinguish the following elements in this action of response:

i) *Faith is an act of obedience to God*: This is found in the classical example of faith (in Abraham and in Mary Gen 22:1-22; Lk 1: 26-38). For Paul too, it is an act of obedience (Rom 1: 5; 16: 26). This becomes clear when we present faith in its relationship to the Word of God. It is a highly efficacious word, which affects the totality of the human beings in all the aspects of their existence. Therefore, faith is the coming into contact with the Word of God and the whole of life of the human person.

ii) *This contact is a free act*: It is the manifestation of that radical act of obedience of the free children of God which the human person owes to God. It is, therefore, solidly based on profound interpersonal relationship. We obey because we are related to the person of God in His fundamental relationship with us.

iii) *Faith implies trust*: Faith, we saw in our biblical exposition, is an act of trust in God.

III. FAITH, A FULLY HUMAN ACT

The essence of faith consists in human being's personal response to God who has revealed Himself to us. The motive of this response and consequent commitment is God Himself, His absolute authority. We have to analyze this response of the human person more closely. In the first place it must be a truly human act, namely, an act in which human intelligence and human will operate. Then we shall consider it from the point of view of God. Faith is both human and divine. We must recognize in the act of faith, the action of the human will that cooperates with the divine grace. Finally, our response is to a God who revealed Himself with a view to build up His Kingdom. This will lead us to the understanding of our response in terms of the commitment of faith in the context of human life; otherwise it remains isolated and irrelevant for people at large.

A. Faith and Human Intelligence

Scripture demands absolute obedience to God because God has spoken. Still, Scripture always puts this demand into the concrete context of human life so that human response is justified and in case the human beings reject God's revelation, they are without excuse (Rom 1:20). We shall see in what sense is our act of faith a reasonable act.

a) FAITH, AN ACT OF THE INTELLECT STATICALLY CONSIDERED - FAITH A REASONABLE ACT

i) What does the term 'reasonable' mean when applied to faith?

'Reasonable' must be carefully distinguished from 'rational'. The term 'rational' means that we accept a truth on evidence, given us by the truth that is accepted. In this case we would have 'science'. When we say that our faith is reasonable we mean: that it is not something against his nature, that the human persons who make an act of faith know the reason why they give their assent, that they give their assent regarding a truth on divine authority. This divine authority need not necessarily be manifested externally; it can also be internal; God can cause in us the certainty of His personal intervention by means of internal illumination.

ii) The basic truth which must be established before our faith can be reasonable: (The preambles of faith)

a) *The existence of God.* This is the philosophical preamble. But it is not necessary that one arrives at this truth philosophically. Though the Scripture always supposes God's existence, it still teaches the possibility of finding God from the created world (Rom 1:18-20).

b) *The fact of revelation.* This is theological preamble. Scripture does not demand the irrational assent to revelation, but offers proofs which make its acceptance justifiable. This is the case in the OT, mainly in Exodus, where Moses' mission is supported by miracles, and where the entire work of liberation is presented as God's sovereign and saving action in history, before the eyes of the people themselves and of the nations. The same is the case in the NT in the miracles of Jesus, and in the early church. We recall to mind the significance of miracles for the faith of the disciples:

From the miracles certitude of the fact of revelation is derived: Jesus himself considers the miracles as proofs of his divine mission. He tells the delegates of John the Baptist to report to him the miracles they have seen (Mt 11:4; see also Jn 5:36). The evangelists consider the miracles as proofs (Jn 20:30f).

These signs are necessary in the actual order of salvation because they confront us with the necessity of choice and commitment (Jn 10:37; 15:24). From these texts it appears that without signs there would be no responsibility and guilt on the part of the Jews; thus miracles are necessary to put us before the challenge of faith.

The disciples do find faith on account of the signs: Nathaniel is struck by Jesus' intimate knowledge of his thoughts (Jn 1:49). The apostles begin to believe in Cana (Jn 2:11). Nicodemus believes because 'no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him' (Jn 3:2).

iii) Doctrine of the Church about the rational foundations of Faith.

a) *Before Vatican I: The censures of Bautain and Bonnetty* An explicit statement is found in "*Qui Pluribus*" 1846 (CF 110) "Religion derives all its strength from the authority of God who has spoken: it can neither be deduced, nor perfected by human reason. Now that it shall not go astray in such an important matter, human reason must closely study divine revelation so as to attain thereby certainty that God has spoken, and to render Him rational worship..." Here in general terms the task is assigned to reason, to discern divine revelation. The problem is, however, explicitly taken up in Vatican I.

b) *The doctrine of Vatican I.* The intention of the Council is to state the objective value of exterior arguments, mainly miracles, against those who base religion merely on subjective criteria, i.e. on religious experience. Only indirectly something is also said about the way in which the human persons perceive these arguments, viz. that they can do so by reason, without the aid of special grace. This is the text of the definition: "In order that the obedience of our faith might be in harmony with reason, God willed that to the inner helps of the Holy Spirit there should be joined exterior proofs of His revelation, to wit, divine facts, and especially miracles and prophecies, which as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge 'of God, are most certain proofs of his divine revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all men." (CF 119). Defined is in this text that there exist divine facts (miracles) which are arguments, distinct from the inner illumination of the Spirit. Implied is in this text, as conclusion, (hence theologically certain) the fact that these arguments are necessary to make the act of faith reasonable. Implied is secondly that reason can perceive these arguments because they are said to be "adapted to the intelligence of all men"

c) *After Vatican I*

In the oath against Modernism (1910) the rational arguments for faith are re-stated, with the explicit insistence that they are accessible to reason: "I recognize the exterior proofs of revelation, that is to say, divine works, mainly miracles and prophecies, as sure signs of the divine origin of the Christian religion and I hold that they are well adapted to the understanding of all ages and of all people, also those of the present time" (CF 143/2).

'Humani Generis' (1950) takes up Vatican I and adds that the arguments are accessible to reason even unaided by grace: "We are provided by God with such a wealth of wonderful exterior signs by which the divine origins of the Christian religion can be proved with certainty even to the natural light of reason alone" (CF 146). It continues, however, that man, blinded by prejudice or passion, is able to disregard the evidence.

iv) Theological Reflection

The miracles of the past, and the persistent miracle of the Church, are signs of the divine action and thus proofs of the divine origin of revelation. Can we discover the divine action in history by mere reason? Certainly, but for the full understanding of God's action we need the light of faith. Only the believer can grasp the full meaning of Christ and his Church.

The Psychological factors leading to, or preventing faith are very important. *'Humani Generis'* stresses their influence. We must acknowledge that any acceptance of truth comes much more from an inner affinity to it, than from external argumentation. A

human being comes to Christ not on the basis of arguments, but because he or she realizes that in him they find the meaning of their existence.

Once we admit that the 'proofs' for the credibility of revelation can be effective only where there is an openness to truth, we are able (with Newman, *Grammar of Assent*) to examine also the nature of these arguments. They are not 'mathematical'; rather are they meant to bring about the closer contact with the revealed reality itself. They have their parallel in the proof of human relations: I shall prove that someone is truly my friend not by a syllogism, but by a number of details, each of which is not a stringent argument, yet their accumulation brings about true evidence: deeds, words, reactions etc. It is not through the numerical addition of many such probabilities that I come to certitude, but through their convergence. "He who is of God, hears the words of God, the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (Jn 8:47).

b) FAITH, AN ACT OF THE INTELLECT, DYNAMICALLY CONSIDERED - AN ACT OF INTELLECTUAL ASSENT

We are not saying that the act of faith is reduced to a mere intellectual assent: but we only say that in the complex structure of the act of faith intellectual assent is included. We do not say that the act of faith is identified with an act of intellectual affirmation, but we only want to say that this intellectual affirmation is implied in it.

i) In the Holy Scripture

In the OT faith is understood not only as an act of trust in the divine promises and as an act of obedience to divine commandments, but also as knowledge of determined events revealed by God. (Gen 15:2-6; Ex 3:1-22; 4: 1-9; 4: 28-31; Is 43:10-12).

In the NT faith is the acceptance of the *Kerygma*. It is described as 'hear the message of the Good News and become believers' (Act 15: 7); 'many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers' (Act 18: 5,8). It is true that in the Synoptics the faith that is required by Jesus is more the trust in Him and in His power to work miracles; but it does not exclude the intellectual acceptance of truth (Mk 16: 15,16). Paul considers faith intimately connected with justification and salvation. And yet he manifests the intellectual aspect of faith in various ways (Rom 10:9; 1Thess 4:14; Phil 2:10,11; Rom 6:8). To become a Christian is to arrive at the knowledge of truth (1 Tim 2:4). In John we have a greater stress of the intellectual aspect of faith than in Paul. John writes his Gospel in order that we may believe (Jn 20: 31). For John 'to believe' is 'to know the truth' (Jn 8: 32).

ii) Tradition

1) In Liturgy: Profession of faith was demanded of the Catechumens before they received Baptism.

2) In the Profession of faith: The Church proposed from the beginning as the object of faith determined truths, expressed in formulas and the Christians professed their faith by pronouncing these determined formulas. This is evident from the various formulas of faith in the NT. e.g. Acts 2:14-19; 1Cor 15:3-5,11 and various creeds.

3) The Doctrine of the Fathers

St. Justin "Whoever is persuaded and believes as true what we teach...". *Clement of Alexandria* defines faith as a pious assent that is given to the divine mysteries. Faith is knowledge whose object is God, revealing Himself to us in Christ. *Origen* calls

Christianity a doctrine. *St. Basil* defines faith as 'an assent without doubt about those things which have been heard'. *Tertul/ian* calls faith: 'regula fidei', 'doctrina fidei', 'Veritatis regula'. *St. Augustine* says that faith is nothing else but to think with assent.

iii) The Doctrine of the Church

The Council of Trent places the act of faith as the first among those acts which dispose human beings for justification. This act of faith is described as follows: "Adults are disposed to that justice, when awakened and assisted by divine grace, they conceive faith from hearing, and are freely led to God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised, especially that the sinner is justified by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (CF 1930).

The Doctrine of I Vatican Council is directly meant against the Rationalists, but indirectly it was also meant against all those who deny the religious value of faith, as an intellectual act: "This faith which is the beginning of man's salvation, is a supernatural virtue whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that the things which He was revealed are true; not because the intrinsic truth of the things viewed by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, and who can neither be deceived, nor deceive" (CF 118).

c) THE MOTIVE OF INTELLECTUAL ASSENT: THE DIVINE TESTIMONY

Here we can distinguish two things: our intellectual assent as an act of commitment to God; then we shall see that this act of commitment is solidly based on the knowledge and truthfulness of God Himself and also on the fact of God speaking to us through revelation. God is the ultimate foundation of our assent. His speech is in perfect agreement with His intelligence.

d) THE OBJECTION OF FAITH

Under the material object of faith we understand all that is to be accepted in the act of faith. It apparently consists of main 'truths' which, however, have the common element, that they are formally revealed, that is, objectively contained in the revelation and reaching us through Scripture and Tradition. We do however admit that a truth formally revealed may be contained in the sources not explicitly; i.e. expressed in the words of the testimony, but only implicitly. It is included in revelation as the tree in the seeds, not yet unfolded. Examples are the Marian dogmas of Immaculate Conception and Assumption. They are formally revealed, but not explicitly.

Formally revealed truths stand in contrast to virtually revealed truths: whatever is deduced from revealed truths by means of rational conclusion (e.g. Trinitarian speculation). What is virtually revealed is not object of divine faith, yet it falls under the responsibility of the Church as it is closely related to faith and relevant for the preservation of the integrity of faith. Virtually revealed truths may become object of ecclesiastical faith, if proposed by the Church with absolute authority, but not of divine faith. Only formally revealed truths constitute the object of divine faith.

We cannot understand the Christian message as the collection of disconnected facts and truths. There is one history of salvation leading up to Christ; in it God reveals

and commits Himself to humankind. This revelation contains God's saving action for us. Hence faith consists in turning to God who through Christ reveals Himself as Saviour. This centre of faith we call the primary object of faith.

C. Faith, As an Act of Human Will: Freedom of Faith

The act of faith is a free act of the human will. The act of faith is an act of the deepest and most personal decision of the human person. God's causality does not destroy human causality and responsibility, but makes it really possible. In faith the human beings freely and fully dispose themselves; they give up their stand on their own foundations and their reliance on their own possibilities, and accept the meaning of their whole existence from God only. This is the meaning of freedom in the act of faith.

a) What is freedom?

Freedom can be described in a negative sense as the absence of every influence which could determine the action of the human person. Such influence can be from outside: physical coercion, or moral pressure which inspires undue fear; it may also come from within as a psychic urge which leads one to certain actions perhaps even without one's being aware of such influences. The act of faith demands full freedom. In fact the Church insists on the freedom of anyone who embraces the faith (*Ad Gentes* n.13). Hence the positive meaning of freedom consists in the human being's capacity to determine oneself, from within, and thus to decide the meaning of one's own life. The human person is the only creature who is able to do so. All others are determined by either exterior factors or by their own nature. The human being is the only one who acts on his or her own. This puts a heavy responsibility on us which we cannot escape (Sartre says: man is condemned to freedom). This, however, is human being's unique dignity; hence the Bible presents the entire work of salvation as liberation: "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5: 1). The freedom of faith was denied by Calvin on the basis of his doctrine on predestination. On the Catholic side, Hermes denied the freedom of real faith, i.e., of the '*fides rationis*'. He admitted freedom only for the '*fides cordis*' which implies the free submission under God's word though it be not understood.

The Gospel is offered for our free choice, mainly in Mk 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned". We have here the New Testament continuation of the theme of Deuteronomy: "I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil" (Deut.30:15.) In all these texts the freedom of the human person concerns immediately the act of faith, not only the remote disposition for it; the human person who is confronted with the Gospel must decide. Clement of Alexandria includes freedom in the definition of faith: "Faith is the assent of the free mind" (*Stromateis* 2:2, 8, 4)

In fact, in faith we make the most radical decision of our freedom, as it disposes not only of some partial aspect of our life, but of some definite action about concerning ourselves. It is our pastoral duty to make the faithful aware of this radical decision which they have made in accepting their faith and in renewing it.

CHAPTER X

QUALITIES OF FAITH

1. GIFT OF GOD

God 'graces' what he creates: he does not, in giving grace, interfere with, or revise, or cancel out his creation; rather, he fulfils it ..; reason is most realized as reason and most fulfilled when God's grace enables it to penetrate beyond this proper sphere (of creation) and guide us towards union with God. So God's gift can only make me into "an enhanced version of myself". An analysis of the act of faith reveals the role of divine grace in the act of faith and consequently the nature of faith as a gift of God. The most that reason can do, through a study of the preambles of faith, is to lead a person to the point of admitting: 'I ought to believe', 'it is reasonable to believe'.

From here to the confession, 'I do believe in God who has revealed himself in Jesus', it is a leap of faith which can only be made under the divine impulse or inward witness of the Holy Spirit by which God attracts a person to himself: "the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me" (Jn 15:26), and "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3; see also Eph 2:8). The ultimate motive of faith is the divine testimony. The signs of divine revelation (e.g. miracles), as known solely by the light of reason, are not the motive or cause of faith. When Peter professed his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, he did not receive this "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17; see also Gal 1.16).

For this reason the Council of Orange (529) asserted: "If anyone says that the increase as well as the beginning of faith and the very desire of faith, proceeds from our own nature and not from a gift of grace, namely from an inspiration of the Holy Spirit changing our will from unbelief to belief . . . such a one reveals oneself in contradiction with the apostolic doctrine" (CF 1917). In fact no one can believe in God "unless first reached by the grace of the divine mercy" (CF 1921; likewise Boniface II (CF 399) and the Council of Trent (CF 1953).

A decisive role is played by the inward illumination of grace. When interior grace draws a person towards God, he/she enters confidently into contact/communion with personal and transcendent truth. One gives oneself to God, who communicates himself to one and draws one to himself. As St Augustine said, the believer is drawn willingly and with delight. Thus Paul preached in Philippi to a group of women, among whom was one Lydia. But "the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14). The exterior witness (Jn 2:11; 5.33) has to be supported by the interior witness of the Spirit (Jn 6:37, 44-45; Mt 11:25-27), if it is to culminate in the act of faith. So God reveals and communicates himself to the person by this attraction to himself, and the person knows God non-conceptually through the experience of the actual ordination to God.

Vatican II clarifies the point: "one cannot give one's adherence to God revealing himself unless the Father draws him to offer to God the reasonable and free submission of faith. . . If this faith is to be shown, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind, and giving joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it" (DH 10 & DV 5). Also St Thomas Aquinas showed how, in faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace" (quoted in CCC, n. 155). So we may say that God both speaks the revealing word and creates the response (like an echo) to this word in a person's heart. If faith is the starting point and the permanent foundation of the life of grace, it is to be expected that faith itself would be of the same gratuitous nature.

2. DARKNESS. OF FAITH

The more one advances in spiritual knowledge, the more one realizes that all the symbols and concepts which stand for God are only analogous, that God is beyond them all, never to be within our grasp, for he "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tm 6.16). This is part of the "dark night" which mystics enter in the course of their spiritual journey. "He cannot be reached by much thinking... He is higher than the highest thoughts, in truth above all thought" (Katha Upanishad, 2). And Thomas Aquinas states: "concerning God, we cannot grasp what he is, but only what he is not, and how other beings stand in relation to him" (quoted in CCC, n. 43). In the same sense St Augustine: "If you have understood, it is not God." The Book of Job lays the accent on the inscrutability of God, which is the reason for the prohibition of making any graven image (Ex 20:4). It is part of our present condition that "for now we see in a mirror dimly. ... for we walk by faith, not by sight" (1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 5:7; see also: 1 In 4:12; Heb. 11.1; Jn 20:29). Against Rationalism, Vatican I affirmed that the divine mysteries "remain covered by the veil of faith itself and shrouded as it were in darkness..." (CF 132).

The darkness of faith is due to the fact that God himself and the truth revealed about him remain the inscrutable mystery; also the fact of revelation remains obscure, because it comes to us only in words and deeds, i.e. in signs and symbols which both reveal and veil the reality for which they stand. Furthermore, as the Catholic Catechism explains: "The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News. They can shake our faith and become a temptation against it" (CCC n. 164). The obscurity of faith can arouse anxiety in the believer, especially in the face of objections. Yet, as Cardinal Newman said: "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt" (ibid. n. 157). If doubt is still possible it is not only due to the darkness of faith, but also due to the human person's freedom and innate instinct of self-reliance. After all, faith is a personal encounter based on freedom. In fact, in faith man makes the most radical decision of his freedom, as he disposes not only of some partial aspect of his life, some definite action, but of his very self (he has to "lose" himself). Like any gift, also the priceless gift of faith can also be lost: "By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith" (1 Tim 1:19).

3. CERTITUDE OF FAITH

The assent of faith is absolutely certain, because it is based on God's authority, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is also absolutely firm, because it is supported by divine grace. The certainty of faith is of quite a different nature from that proper to philosophic or scientific knowledge. For it is based neither on the obvious truth of revelation, which remains essentially mysterious, nor on any direct evidence of the fact of revelation. Yet, the paradox is that faith is absolutely certain. It is not because the believer sees the truth of the mystery that he/she accepts divine revelation. The absolute certainty of faith must be placed in the inward illumination of grace. The Catholic Catechism clarifies: "To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but 'the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives' [Thomas Aquinas]" (CCC n. 157). From this point of view it may be said that faith is more certain than all human knowledge (ibid.)

4. COMMUNITARIAN, INHERITED AND PERSONALIZED

"Faith comes from what is heard" (Rom 10:17). It must be received. Faith may be a personal act, but that does not make it an isolated act: "No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. .. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith" (CCC n. 166). The Christian accepts the faith of the Church which is always greater and more comprehensive than that of any individual, because the faith of the Church has been given the whole time, from Christ till the end of history, for its experience and development. This is humbling but also liberating, because thereby I can have greater share in the fullness of the whole faith. This is what is implied in "believing the Church".

In fact all the sacraments are meant to be, as far as possible, community celebrations. In this way the role which the Church plays in our faith life is brought out more clearly. The sacraments "not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called 'sacraments of faith'" (SC 59). All this is very much in keeping with the social nature of the human person: "It has not pleased God to call people to share his life merely as individuals without any mutual bonds. Rather, he wills to mould them into a people in whom his sons, once scattered abroad, can be gathered together (Cfr Jn 11:52)" (AG 2; also LG 9).

Thus we see that God comes to us through others and draws us together. The Catholic Catechism sums up: "'Believing' is an ecclesial act. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports, and nourishes our faith. The Church is the mother of all believers" (CCC n. 181). For this reason the Fathers of the Church often described the Church as 'mother'. In baptism she becomes the mother of catechumen's and presents them as children to the Father (Tertullian; cf. Gal 4:19, 26). Hence she may be called "mother forever in labour" (St Methodius). Several Fathers remark that she nourishes us at her breasts with the milk of faith. The Church may also be called our spiritual motherland,

for she provides a spiritual atmosphere in which she trains us and moulds our spiritual life. This she does through the scriptures, her liturgy and teaching, the way of life she inculcates and the examples of the saints.

Through a process of personal appropriation the believer is expected to grow in the life of faith. This process may be compared to the growth of a person in society. One is born into a human society and has to depend, in daily life, on the collective experience of family and people, while oneself growing into one's own responsibility. Likewise the life of faith is first accepted from the community, but then must be appropriated in a personal manner, according to one's ability and "according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him" (Rom. 12.3). It is vital that the religious knowledge of the faithful keep pace with their advance in the secular sciences. Therefore Vatican II "hoped that many lay persons will receive an appropriate formation in the sacred sciences, and that some will develop and deepen these studies by their own labours" (GS 62).

Prayer is perhaps the most important expression of and testimony to faith. It is also through prayer that we nourish the life of faith, which is not a mere intellectual assent but a personal commitment and a living communion in which God shares his life with humans. The life in God's presence and in communion with him transforms the believer's way of life and of relating to others. One might know all theology and yet be an unbeliever. The unbelieving Jews knew much about Jesus, yet they missed the inner meaning of his person and mission. The decisive difference from the believer is the latter's realization of a personal communion. This realization of belonging to God and being accepted by him is basic to the life of faith. It follows that an unlettered person may be more deeply rooted in the life of faith than a scholar. As the believer grows in the life of faith, he experiences his acts as done in union with God and as a concrete expression of his relation to God. It is this life of faith which confers on the believer, not simply new objects of knowledge, but a new way of understanding and seeing things. For example, a child may not know more facts about his parents than an outsider. Yet the child, sharing as he does in the family life, 'knows' his parents in a different way (Cf. Rom 8.15; Gal 4:6). Vatican II had in mind a comprehensive growth of the laity in this life of faith: "from the very beginning of their formation the laity should gradually and prudently learn how to view, judge, and do all things in the light of faith" (AA 29).

CHAPTER XI

FAITH AND SALVATION

After considering the nature and qualities of the act of faith, we speak about its place in the order of salvation. We begin with the general statement that faith is necessary for salvation, as this need is stressed in the whole of Scripture and tradition. We have then to consider the problem of those who leave the Church and the salvation of those who profess other faiths.

1. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH FOR SALVATION

By 'faith' we understand here the "act of faith" or the faith commitment. The necessity of which we speak is not mere necessity of a precept (*necessitas praecepti*) from which there could be a dispensation, but that of a means (*necessitas medii*) which is absolutely required. Faith has an irreplaceable function within the process of justification and salvation.

A. Scripture

a) From the *Synoptics* we have the authoritative text of Mk 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved". The text speaks about faith in the strict sense, i.e., the response to the preaching of the Apostles: Those who reject it are condemned. Thus faith is necessary. The rejection here is understood obviously in the sense of ill will and hence sinful. We have to see later what happens to those who do not believe in Christ, but are in good faith.

b) Most important is *St. Paul's testimony*. Justification through faith belongs to the center of his message. The human beings cannot be saved through any power of their own, but only through God in Jesus, and this saving grace can be accepted by them only through faith. Hence from the point of view of the human beings, faith, in contrast to any works of the law, is the way of salvation. All self glory of the human person is excluded, "on the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith (*pistei*) apart from the works of the law" (Rom 3:28f.). '*Pistei*' is an instrumental dative, and means causality. It stands in contrast to the works of the law which, in the opinion of the Jews, had been the cause of justice. The same is said from the point of view of God. In the same context, Paul says that both, the Jews and the Gentiles, without any distinction are saved, according to God's disposition, only by faith: "God is one, and He will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith" (Rom.3: 30). Hence, from the point of view of the Apostle, he has to preach the Gospel: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith, for faith, as it is written: The one who is righteous, will live by faith" (Rom 1:16f). Abraham is the example of faith; he was accepted by God: "Abraham believed in God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:3; Gen 15:6). We conclude: according to St. Paul, objective redemption is through faith, which means by the human person opening himself or herself totally to God, relinquishing their self-reliance, and having their glory only in God.

c) *Heb 11: 6* contains the most explicit statement on the necessity of faith: "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him". The context is significant: It speaks of the need for endurance and patience even if the fulfillment of the promises is delayed. Hence the examples of faith are those who did not fail in the trial of their faith.

d) *St. John* also has very decisive formulas: "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe, is condemned already, because he has not believed

in the name of the only Son of God" (3:18). "Truly I say to you he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life: he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (5:24). Eternal life comes from faith. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him" (3:36). Through faith the human person is linked with God, is born anew from God, and conquers the world. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 5:4).

B. From the Fathers

a) In Christ alone there is salvation. Hence faith in Christ is needed to receive salvation. *Tertullian*: "There is one sure thing that is established by Christ: that the nations must believe..." *Origen* quotes Celsius who ridicules the various religious sects each of which demands faith in their prophets. "Jesus is the only one of whom it is preached all over the world that he came as Son of God into this life".

b) Similarly, in the subjective sphere, faith is needed for salvation. Against the Pelagian idea of man's own possibility *Augustine* demands that also faith itself be attributed to God, not to man's possibilities or merits, and in this context he describes faith as that "from which all justice begins". "No one is saved from damnation except through faith in Jesus Christ". The strongest formulas come from Augustine's disciple *Fulgentius*: "Faith is the foundation of all good; it is the beginning of human salvation... without it no one can find the grace of justification in this world, nor will he find life everlasting in the world to come".

c. The doctrine of the Church

It is expressed primarily in the *Council of Trent*. Faith has its prominent place in the process of justification. St. Paul's idea of justification through faith is authentically interpreted: "When the apostle says that the human person is justified 'through faith' and 'gratuitously', these words are to be understood in the sense in which the Catholic Church has held and declared them with uninterrupted unanimity, namely, that we are said to be justified through faith because 'faith is the beginning of human being's salvation', the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and to come into the fellowship of his sons" (CF 1935). Here the Council speaks of the act of faith (*fides qua*). It is the foundation of all justice, the beginning of justification. The Tridentine Council defines the necessity of faith for salvation (ND 118, 122).

Vatican II insists on the point: In '*Lumen Gentium*' n.14: "In explicit terms He himself (Christ) affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5)". The *Mission decree* n.7 takes up the text of *Lumen Gentium*, and bases on it the sacred duty of the church "to preach the Gospel, Hence missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity". In the *Decree on the Priestly Ministry* n.4, the necessity of faith is stressed as the reason for the preaching of the word of God: "Since no one can be saved who has not first believed, priests as co-workers with their bishops, have as their primary duty the proclamation of the Gospel of God to all..."

2. CAN A CATHOLIC BE JUSTIFIED TO LEAVE THE CHURCH?

A. The Problem

A child grows and, in the secular sphere, advances in knowledge and maturity; also uneducated people grow in the breadth of experience through the contact with a pluralistic world. It is no longer possible for them to accept their faith simply on the basis of their parents' teaching, or the testimony of the priests. If under such conditions no possibility of further instruction is possible, can Christians be justified in giving up their faith?

B. What do the Scriptures say about the problem?

The problem is not primarily an intellectual one, but a question of loyalty to a commitment. Thus *Timothy* is asked to keep his faith and good conscience, and not to follow the example of others: "Certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith" (1 Tim 1:19). The *Epistle to the Hebrews* speaks with grave warning of those who, after having received the faith, fall away, as there seems to be no remedy for them (Heb 6:4ff). *Peter* speaks harshly about those who return to the defilements of the world (2 Peter 2:21).

C. The Teaching of Vatican I

Faith is seen not merely as an intellectual assent, but as a pledge of union with God, which is supported by God's grace. Besides, for the believer, there is always the living argument of the Church. For both reasons, there can be no justification for a believer to leave the Church (CF 124).

D. Open Questions.

However, there remain some open questions:

i) Whether the sin of the one who loses the faith is a fault of apostasy, or whether the fault lies perhaps somewhere else. "Desertion of God" may consist in the long negligence of deepening the knowledge of faith and its preambles; it may lie in a general revolt against inherited beliefs; it may be found in moral license etc.

ii) Whether and how far it can be said about all Christians that they (as the text puts it) "have received the faith under the teaching authority of the Church". This probably can only be said about those who have been instructed properly, which often is not the case. Hence we conclude:

As faith is the basis of the entire Christian life, it must not only be preserved, but also cultivated. This means not merely an intellectual study, but much more a spiritual growth in the living Church. The Christians must realize that through their faith-commitment, which is sealed in baptism, they are inserted into communion with Christ together with all the faithful, and in this communion of the Spirit, they are sons and daughters of God. We must, therefore, in order to preserve the faith of the faithful, deepen the realization of the life of the Church. The renewed idea of the Church more as '*Mysterium*' than as institution, more as communion than as legal structure, seems of vital significance for the life of faith in a time of overpowering secular forces. It will be one of the main pastoral concerns in the time to come to find the concrete expressions and structures required for this renewed realization of the Church as a true communion of faith, in the spirit of Jesus.

3. SAVING FAITH OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

A. Biblical Perspective

Scripture and tradition stress the necessity of faith for salvation; cf. CF 122, 1935. Faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6), is a person's response to revelation. One is meant to attain to faith in the true God from "what is seen" (Heb 11:1-3), and so find salvation (Rom 1:21). This faith will correspond to the covenant in which one lives one's life. The Bible knows of two basic types of covenant, corresponding to the two forms of revelation, cosmic and historical. There is the cosmic covenant with Noah on the one hand, and the covenants with Abraham, Moses and Jesus on the other hand. The latter covenants do not abrogate the former, but rather confirm, explicate and elevate it. The covenant with Noah (Gen 9:8-17) is universal; in entering into the covenant, Noah represents his three sons, who are at the head of the diverse peoples of the world. This covenant is not only with the whole of humanity, but also with the whole cosmos (Gen 9:10). It is "everlasting" and expresses God's permanent care for all (Sir 44:17-18; Is 54:9). It is unilateral and is based on God's faithfulness (Jer 33:20).

The Old Testament presents several models of this faith among non-Israelite people, some of whom were prophets or priests in their respective religious traditions. These are the 'holy pagans', to borrow the title of Danielou's book. It matters little that some of these figures may not be historical. It is quite clear that they are symbolic of the many people who have attained profound faith and sanctity, living in the Noah covenant, which for that reason qualifies as a covenant of grace. It is faith that made them righteous before God. From the earliest generations "people began to invoke the name of the Lord ['Yahweh']"(Gen 4:26).

First among these is Abel, whom Jesus called "the righteous one"; he is the first martyr (Mt 23:35); his death prefigures the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 12:24). "By faith Abel offered to a God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. ... through his faith he still speaks" (Heb 11:4). Enoch was a Babylonian prophet. He is reputed to have become a teacher of the true God, in the midst of a world of idolatry and superstition. He "walked with God" (Gen 5:22, 24), and "was an example of repentance to all generations" (Sir 44:16; see also Jude 14). Enoch was a man of deep faith for "he was attested as having pleased God; and without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb 11:6). "Noah was found perfect and righteous" (Sir 44:17; Ez 14:14). He "found favour in the eyes of the Lord... was blameless...; Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:8-9). By faith he believed God's warning about events to come and "became an heir of the righteousness that is in accordance with faith" (Heb 11:7). He was also "a herald of righteousness" (2 Pt 2:5). Job was a native of Edom, an area held in particular contempt by Israel. He is clothed with righteousness (Job 29:14; Ez 14:14). His firm faith in God arises out of a deep experience of God whom he "sees" (Job 42:5). Balaam, though not a worshiper of Yahweh, receives from Yahweh genuine prophecies. The Ninevites had destroyed Israel, yet they are presented as better than Jonah the prophet of Israel, for they "believed God" (Jon 3:5); the same Hebrew expression is used for Abraham's faith, in Gen. 15.6. The whole episode is like a commentary in action on Ez 3:4-7: "many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language, whose words you cannot understand" are more receptive of God's word than the house of Israel.

In the New Testament we see that God accepts the prayers of the Roman

centurion (Acts 10:4,31). In Athens Paul praises the religious spirit of the Greeks; however, the starting point of his discourse there is not any of the Greek gods, but the "unknown God" (Acts 17:23).

B. Magisterium

The condemnation of the following propositions of the Jansenists by the Holy Office (1690) and of Quesnel by Pope Clement XI (1713) clearly imply the possibility of saving faith among all peoples: "Pagans, Jews, heretics, and others of this kind receive no influence at all from Jesus Christ; hence one rightly concludes that their wills are naked and defenseless, totally lacking sufficient grace... No grace is granted outside the Church" (CF 2305, 2429). Between the two Vatican councils a shift of emphasis took place in the approach to faith. It was a shift away from content (intellectual element) to the inner attitude of surrender and obedience of the whole person to God (Cf. Rom 2:6-16; Eph 6:8; Mt 25:31-46). This surrender is exercised in the concrete events and tasks of life. By it, one is united with Jesus' own obedience unto death. Thus, after affirming that "by his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person" and that "grace works in an unseen way" in the hearts of all people of good will, Vatican II recommends: "We ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every person the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (GS 22). AG 7 acknowledges that God "can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him". Salvation is possible for the followers of other religions, who "seek God" and "strive to do his will"; the help necessary for salvation is not denied to sincere non-believers "who strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace" (LG 16).

E. Theological Reflection

The teaching of the Church clearly implies that saving faith is found outside the Church, but does not elaborate its nature; this is left to theological reflection. We may say that the concept of faith, in so far as it is required for salvation, centres on the 'fides qua' i.e. on the personal commitment of faith. This commitment in its full meaning is the faith-answer to God who has spoken through Christ and implies membership in the communion of the faithful i.e. in the Catholic Church. But the material content of this commitment may, without fault of the believer, fall short of this fullness. In this case, man is not to be judged by the standards of the material object of his faith, but by the sincerity of his commitment that is inspired by grace. Salvation comes to man not by a mechanical application of Christ's merits, but through 'faith' in Jesus Christ to be sealed by baptism. Faith means more than the conceptual knowledge of and the notional assent to revealed truth. It means acceptance of Christ as Saviour, and readiness to share in his life, death and resurrection. Hence saving faith must express itself in the total orientation of man's life, and particularly in his union with Christ's saving obedience to his Father in the hour of death. Every moral decision of man, if oriented towards a last end, is an act of either obedience or disobedience to God and hence, of inner conformity with Christ or an alienation from him.

The existence of saving faith among the followers of other religions does not detract from Christ's exclusiveness as the way of salvation. Rather, it shows that his hidden presence reaches much farther than formerly suspected.

F. Faith in Hinduism - *sraddha* and *bhakti*

Implicit faith as means of salvation may be found anywhere in traditional religions, and in modern ideologies. Here we take up the question in which form implicit faith is expressed in traditional Hinduism.

Hinduism is not a religious system of unified structure, but comprises many religious traditions and systems of thought. Still, it contains common basic attitudes and concepts, which in a general sense can be called traditional Hinduism. If we look for the way in which a Hindu could find salvation, we insist on the personal attitudes demanded by traditional Hinduism. We first speak about the universal attitude of personal engagement and dynamic commitment, found throughout the various systems of Hinduism, *sraddha*. It is not connected with any doctrinal statements, but expresses the commitment to the path of salvation (*marga*), which one has chosen. We have, further, the devotedness to the personal God in worship and love - *bhakti*. We do not say that these attitudes simply are equivalent to implicit faith. Still, the meaning of both of them, as expressed in the sources, shows that those who genuinely follow these attitudes may in fact be guided by divine grace, through implicit faith, to their salvation.

a) *Sraddha*

The term goes back to Vedic times where it stands for the required disposition for the sacrifice. In order to be efficacious, the sacrifice must be performed with *sraddha* (Mund., I, 1, 10). As the ritualistic outlook widens, *sraddha* becomes a general and essential inner attitude required for all spiritual pursuits. In *Satapata Brahman*, XI, 3, 1 the question is asked: if there were no milk, rice, herbs, fruits, water, "wherewith wouldst thou sacrifice?" *Yajnyavalkya* answers: "Then indeed there would be nothing whatsoever here, and yet there would be offered the truth in *sraddha*". This means that ultimately the inner attitude of sacrifice is essential, beyond all ritual performances. *Sraddha* leads to final salvation, even apart from sacrifices.

Man can progress on a religious path only in so far as he enters upon it with his whole self, and allows himself to be drawn to his goal by his inner religious urge. This dynamism may be more or less pure, according to the nature of the individual. It may lead to different forms of practice, and to different objects of worship according to the disposition and knowledge of man. But in all its forms, *sraddha* is man's participation in the divine force that draws creatures to their last destiny.

b) *Bhakti*

More than *sraddha*, *bhakti* is important as an analogous concept of faith. *Bhakti* comes from the root *bhaj* with a double meaning: distribute, or share and participate in something. V.S. Apte gives for *bhakti* apart from merely profane meanings; devotional attachment, loyalty, faithfulness; faith, belief, pious faith; reverence, service, worship, homage. In the definition usually the emotional element is stressed, because, against brahmanic ritualism and upanishadic intellectualism, the popular sects stressed the affective side of religion. But in its specific meaning it stands for adoring veneration, either in exterior cult, or in inner devotedness and total dedication.

